

Current Issues in 19th Century Art



Van Gogh Studies 1

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Vincent van Gogh, *Self-portrait as an artist*, 1888, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam;
F 522 JH 1356

Foreword

The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam houses the largest collection of works by Vincent van Gogh in the world. The enormous numbers of visitors who come to the museum year on year are a testimony to the artist's undiminished popularity and the enduring appeal of his masterful paintings and drawings. Besides presenting works by Van Gogh, the museum has also made it its mission to collect works by his contemporaries, either because they had inspired him or were inspired by him. The museum's efforts in displaying the collection and presenting its exhibitions, as well as in developing its educational programme, are geared towards making the art of Van Gogh and his contemporaries accessible to the widest possible public.

The essential underpinning of these activities is scholarship. It is the work of researchers and curators both at the Van Gogh Museum and in universities and museums around the world that continually enriches our understanding of Van Gogh and the art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Research therefore represents a core aspect of the Van Gogh Museum's mission, and the museum maintains an ambitious research programme. It includes the ongoing series of collection catalogues; a new scholarly, fully annotated, edition of Van Gogh's entire correspondence, to be published both on the world wide web and in book form in 2009; and a multi-year research project on the painting techniques and studio practices of Van Gogh and his contemporaries. Over the years the museum has also contributed to the ongoing scholarly debate in the field of nineteenth-century studies with the publication of its series of *Cahiers* (1988-2002) and the *Van Gogh Museum Journal* (1995-2003). The museum's new series, *Van Gogh Studies*, of which this is the first volume, will renew this practice. (Information on internal aspects of the Van Gogh Museum formerly included in the *Journal* will in future be published in more appropriate and readily accessible places such as the museum's annual report and website.)

The publication of a new scholarly journal is an ambitious project that requires not only the help and expertise of many people but also considerable amounts of time, energy and patience. In the first instance I would like to thank the authors of this volume for supporting this new initiative with their contributions. They have taken a considerable leap of faith in making their work available for the first volume of this new series, for which we are deeply grateful.

A publication of this kind requires the strong guiding hand of an expert editorial board. My gratitude goes to the editor-in-chief, Chris Stolwijk, and the members of the board, who have all committed many hours to selecting the contributions in an effort to ensure that *Van Gogh Studies* meets the highest possible scholarly standards. Our managing editor, Michael Raeburn, deserves special thanks for his diligence and sensitive approach in pulling the manuscript together into an eminently readable book. Fieke Pabst, in her function as photo editor put considerable efforts into ensuring that the required illustrations – some from rather exotic places – all found their way into the publication. Essential to the appeal of the new series is of course its appearance, and I am enormously grateful to our designer Frederik de Wal for providing us with a handsome modern design for this book and the entire series. For the production of this volume and their careful attention to a myriad of details, we are, as ever, deeply indebted to our head of publications, Suzanne Bogman, and her assistant Geri Klazema. Finally, the Van Gogh Museum enjoys a longstanding relationship with the publishing house Waanders. We are pleased that Waanders has once again agreed to work with us in taking on the publishing of *Van Gogh Studies*, and I would like to extend our thanks to Wim Waanders and Ben Belt.

In today's world of publishing the launch of a new scholarly journal is a rare – and some might say audacious – enterprise. Therefore we at the Van Gogh Museum take pride in the fact that the museum is able to fulfill its mission of pursuing and promoting serious scholarship through this new initiative. We very much hope that *Van Gogh Studies* will contribute a new and interesting facet to the scholarly debate around the world and that it will find a wide readership among specialists and interested amateurs alike.

Axel Rüger
Director Van Gogh Museum

Preface

The launch of a new international journal devoted to the art of the late nineteenth century is a bold venture and one that demands a single-minded purpose, at a time when research into the period seems to be in jeopardy and the publication of scholarly art books is becoming increasingly difficult. The Van Gogh Museum has taken up this challenge, and, in collaboration with Waanders Publishers, is proud to present the first volume in its new series, *Van Gogh Studies*.

It is not every day that a museum takes the initiative in publishing a scholarly journal. The Van Gogh Museum has, however, long provided the stimulus for research into the art of the period 1830-1914 – paying special attention to the life and work of Vincent van Gogh – out of a conviction that research of the highest standard is fundamental for the museum's activities, whether they are provided for the general public or for specialists.

Van Gogh Studies offers an opportunity to strengthen these ties. The series aims to provide a mouthpiece for the expression of the many diverse, and sometimes contradictory, trends in the study of nineteenth-century art. The pieces published in *Van Gogh Studies* will examine the life and work of Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries from a variety of perspectives. The contributions are intended as a vehicle for further scholarly research, ranging broadly from the Van Gogh Museum's core concerns to the wide circle of artists around Van Gogh and themes related to Van Gogh's art and time.

Today, research into the art of the late nineteenth century can be characterized as multifaceted in both its methods and its subjects. Whereas in the past publications were often dominated by classic monographs or formalist art-historical studies, modern methodologies derived from (cultural) history, sociology and economics (to name but a few of the disciplines) have today come increasingly to the fore. Conservation research, too, has made an important impact on the interpretation of nineteenth-century art. And although new and fascinating information is continually being brought to light, numerous questions still remain to be answered.

Van Gogh Studies has high ambitions. The series will publish recent, in-depth research into Van Gogh and related areas of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art and culture, which will also be representative of current trends in the study of western European art. Its pages are open to original research articles and

articles based on lectures given at symposia on such varying topics as issues of authenticity, archival research and sources, problems of conservation and restoration, Van Gogh's correspondence, the nineteenth-century art market, the history of ideas, reception history and other related fields.

Van Gogh Studies will be published annually as an anthology of essays, and the series will also, on occasion, include monographic studies. It may thus be seen as a successor to both the museum's long-running *Cahier* series and the *Van Gogh Museum Journal*. The former was intended principally as a vehicle for the publication of research into the life and work of Van Gogh, and it included works such as Walter Feilchenfeldt's *Vincent van Gogh & Paul Cassirer* (1988) and *The account book of Theo van Gogh and Jo van Gogh-Bonger* by Chris Stolwijk and Han Veenenbos (2002). The *Journal*, of which eight volumes were published, starting in 1995, was designed 'both to report on the Museum's activities and, more particularly, to be a motor and repository for scholarship on the work of Van Gogh and aspects of the permanent collection in a broader context'. While the *Van Gogh Museum Journal* certainly published a substantial body of rewarding research, it suffered from its inception from a lack of systematic international distribution. If *Van Gogh Studies* is to succeed, an international perspective is an absolute necessity.

Although the Van Gogh Museum has played the initiating role in the conception of *Van Gogh Studies* it has an independent Editorial Board made up of the following members:

- RICHARD THOMSON, Watson Gordon Professor of Fine Art, University of Edinburgh
- DARIO GAMBONI, Professor of Art History, University of Geneva
- SUSAN ALYSON STEIN, Curator of Paintings, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- RACHEL ESNER, Assistant Professor, Art of the Modern Period, University of Amsterdam
- SJRAAR VAN HEUGTEN, Head of Collections, Van Gogh Museum
- LEO JANSEN, Curator of Paintings, Van Gogh Museum
- AXEL RÜGER, Director, Van Gogh Museum
- CHRIS STOLWIJK, Head of Research, Van Gogh Museum, *Editor-in-chief*
- MICHAEL RAEBURN, London, *Managing editor*

The Board will strive to publish the new series in accordance with the same high standards as the former *Cahiers* and *Van Gogh Museum Journal* but with a more wide-ranging and international appeal. It is responsible for the acquisition, peer review and editorial supervision of manuscripts, which should in the first place be submitted to the Head of Research at the Van Gogh Museum, who will act as editor-in-chief.

The projected international readership of *Van Gogh Studies* includes academics, museum curators and researchers, students, and all those interested in the history of the art of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Board is convinced that in this first issue readers will receive an excellent sampling of contemporary research into the period. A variety of essays on diverse aspects of the always inspiring lives and work of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gauguin – including investigations into reception and archaeological research – are interspersed with studies on the art theory of Henry Nocq, a fellow artist and friend of Toulouse-Lautrec, and on the structure of the nineteenth-century French art market.

Curtains up!

For the Editorial Board,

Chris Stolwijk
Editor-in-chief *Van Gogh Studies*

Note to the reader

Van Gogh Studies publishes recent, in-depth research into Van Gogh and related areas of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art and culture, which is representative of current trends in the study of western European art. The series will be published annually as an anthology of essays, and will, on occasion, also include monographic studies.

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For more information about *Van Gogh Studies* please contact the editor's office.

References to Van Gogh's letters are given in the form of two numbers. The first refers to *De brieven van Vincent van Gogh*, ed. Han van Crimpen and Monique Berends-Albert, 4 vols., The Hague 1990; and the second to *Verzamelde brieven van Vincent van Gogh*, 4 vols., Amsterdam & Antwerp 1952-54. All quotations have been checked against the original letters by the translators.

References to Van Gogh's work are also given in the form of two numbers. The first F number refers to Jacob-Baart de la Faille, *The works of Vincent van Gogh: His paintings and drawings*, Amsterdam 1970; and the second JH number to Jan Hulsker, *The new complete Van Gogh: Paintings, drawings, sketches. Revised and enlarged edition of the catalogue raisonné of the works of Vincent van Gogh*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia 1996.

References to Gauguin's paintings and drawings are given in the form of a W number, which refers to Georges Wildenstein, *Gauguin: 1. Catalogue*, Paris 1964, and to Sylvie Crussard, Martine Heudron and Daniel Wildenstein, *Gauguin: Premier itinéraire d'un sauvage. Catalogue de l'œuvre peint (1873-1888)*, 2 vols., Paris 2001.

References to Gauguin's sculptures and ceramics are given in the form of a G number, which refers to Christopher Gray, *Sculpture and ceramics of Paul Gauguin*, Baltimore 1963.



1. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Portrait of Henry Nocq*, 1897, Private collection

Art and the machine in 1896: Henry Nocq, William Morris and the decorative arts

Robert L. Herbert

Nocq's book

In 1896 Henry Nocq (ill. 1) published a treasure-trove of opinions from contemporary artists and critics about the state of the decorative arts: *Tendances nouvelles: Enquête sur l'évolution des industries d'art* (Paris, Henri Floury; ill. 2).¹ Nocq's book, which gives witness to issues and ideas that were being hotly debated in 1894 and 1895, has been discussed by only one modern scholar, Rosella Froissart-Pezone.² She shows that Nocq was an enterprising artist and writer, and she perceptively summarizes his book. However, her discussion of it, being brief, does not try to deal with the full display of texts and ideas that Nocq published. The fascination of his book lies in its variety of argumentative opinions about the decorative arts, including the volatile issue of their involvement with industrial production.

The origin of Nocq's book goes back to 2 September 1894, when in the weekly *Le Journal des artistes* Nocq published a survey in the form of questions about the decorative and industrial arts. Over the course of that autumn he printed dozens of responses to his questions. Some of these resulted from interviews with contemporaries, including Edmond de Goncourt, Félix Bracquemond and Alexandre Charpentier. Other responses were letters from Paul Gauguin, Eugène Grasset, Jean Dampé, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Frantz Jourdain and many more. Most of those who replied to Nocq or granted him interviews were sculptors, furniture

designers, jewellers, ceramists and printmakers, but there were also several writers and merchants. These little-known texts constitute a reservoir of ideas characterized by the passions of practising craftsmen. In his book in 1896, Nocq reprinted these responses and added interviews with William Morris and Walter Crane, portions of two articles published elsewhere, a preface by Gustave Geffroy and an extended essay of his own. In Appendix A, I republish four of the most interesting of these forgotten texts, those by Goncourt, Grasset, William Morris and Walter Crane. No modern biographer or historian of those artists has referred to these texts. In Appendix B, I list all the men who responded to Nocq (no women volunteered their views), and in Appendix C, I summarize the differences between the texts in the book of 1896 and those in *Le Journal des artistes* in 1894.³



2. Henry Nocq, front cover of
Tendances Nouvelles, 1896

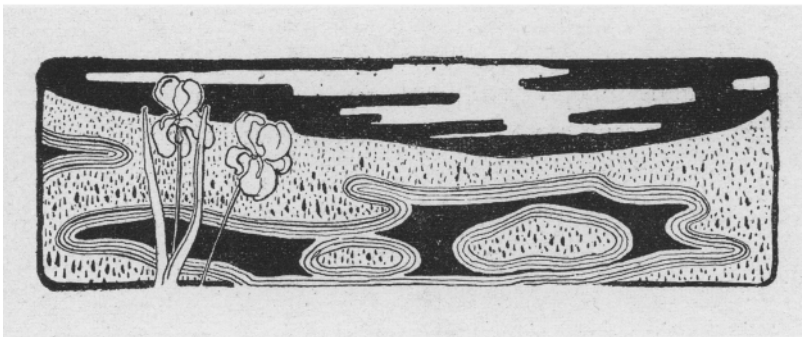
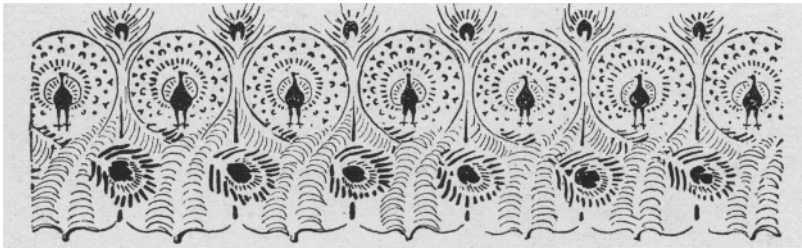
3. Henry Nocq, *Yvette Guilbert*, 1895,
polychrome sandstone in oak frame,
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Nocq himself was a sculptor and medallist with a distinct interest in the issues he raised, and he was also an editor with a shrewd style of writing. *Tendances nouvelles* is such a brilliant conception that it has no peer in later nineteenth-century books on the arts. Nocq gave it a comprehensive index of all names referred to anywhere in the book and a detailed table of contents; he embellished it with a number of vignettes in striking Art Nouveau style (probably by him, but no credit is given; ill. 4-7). Although only twenty-eight in 1896, Nocq had been exhibiting for nine years (ill. 3) and was already an experienced editor.⁴ One gains some confidence in his reporting because he was conscious of his responsibilities and of the fact that his interviews were dialogues. 'In publishing oral interviews, I made every effort to respect scrupulously at least the sense of the conversations,



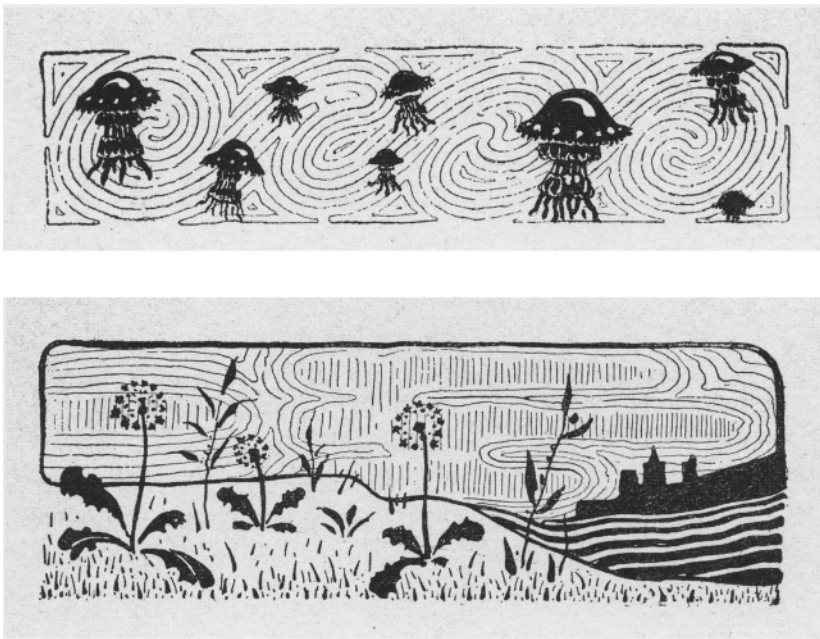
even if the form and the exact words escape me sometimes. [...] I intervene as little as possible, and always in an interrogative form. However, if some people have anticipated my own opinions, it would be bad grace of me to complain; I deduce that they have followed my preceding studies with benevolent attention.’⁵ This is fair enough, yet Nocq wrote that, in order to avoid repetitious ideas and excessive length, he did not publish all the responses he had received. Too many had not been granted enough time for serious reflections and were full of ‘vague aspirations’ (p.85). His criteria seem reasonably objective, but of course they were based on his own predilections, which surface here and there in short glosses on his witnesses’ texts and more fully in his essay that forms the second half of the book.

In recounting his interviews, Nocq described some of his interlocutors’ dwellings; they make fascinating reading. The painter Ernest Duez, *boulevardier* and friend of Manet, showed him some mural decorations he was making by combining several proofs of designs in drypoint. He also pointed to a number of drawings after native flowers (‘the most humble, the least known’) destined for textiles that his wife was embroidering with full attention to the differences in the materials she was using. As he approached the suburban home of the sculptor Alexandre Charpentier, Nocq was pleased to discover ‘at the end of a large unkempt garden



4/5. Vignettes from Henry Nocq's *Tendances Nouvelles*, 1896, pp. 11 and 67

the cob-walled studio and the house, a good country house with light curtains at the windows [...]. Along the wall, the damp laundry dries on cords stretched from one tree to the next, white sheets, little red dresses.⁶ By contrast, when he described the approaches to 'M. Honoré', manager of the Grands Magasins du Louvre, he sketched an environment worthy of Tartuffe. Making his way through the labyrinthine interior, from time to time he asked his way of 'an "inspector", with a white tie. The name of M. Honoré alone made the grave man, whose tie symbolized the authority of the master I was on my way to visit, very attentive and excessively obliging. So I went along, quite slowly, jostled, crushed, struggling against the demented whirl of women of doubtful elegance, of banal or suspicious odour. Finally I arrived in front of a glazed door, guarded by a majestic soldier in his blue livery with gold buttons. From the antechamber, where numerous petitioners were seated on benches, I was first introduced into the room of the private secretary – I was about to say *chef de cabinet* – to whom I explained the purpose of my enterprise. Then the secretary left me alone for three or four minutes, and returned to let me know that M. Honoré awaited me – and the astonished chamberlains asked themselves who is this personage that their master received in private audience?' (p. 86)⁷



6/7. Vignettes from Henry Nocq's *Tendances Nouvelles*, 1896, pp. 135 and 159

With such lively descriptions, we know that we are in the hands of a skilful writer. Nocq did not organize his responses in the order in which he had received them in 1894, nor according to 'different artistic tendencies' or 'following the relative competence and repute of the witnesses', lest he create hierarchies or offend some 'by making too precise the attitude of those who prefer the safety of ambiguities' (p. 10).⁸ There is, however, a definite pattern in the book. At the outset, Geffroy's preface gave an imprimatur to Nocq's enterprise from an Olympian and condescending height.⁹ He warned the reader to anticipate the survey's disparate views and warmly defended libraries and museums that fell under attack from several artists. Following the preface, Nocq laid out the terms of his survey in a brief introduction, and then he began the book proper with his witnesses. The first twenty-one are artists, implying that he considered their views to be the nucleus of his survey. He followed these with responses of two merchants and the Mayor of Brussels, Charles Buls, who had attacked the medievalizing views of some of the witnesses. Nocq then printed reactions to Buls's letter from Grasset and the Belgian artist Félix de Breux, and gave Buls space for a rebuttal. In this way he made room for a dialogue among his respondents.

In another instance of Nocq's fair-minded procedure, he republished in its entirety an article by the socialist Paul Lagarde that attacked Nocq's opinions of unionization and artisans' demands for copyright. For his final parade of witnesses, he reprinted the views of several professional writers: Goncourt, Octave Uzanne, Victor Champier, Henry Havard, Arsène Alexandre and Roger Marx. They were all ardent partisans of the need for a renewal of the decorative arts, but they were more conservative than the artists. Nocq may have deliberately chosen to dampen the practitioners' enthusiasms with cool mists from notable pundits before he addressed the reader in his own essay.

The context for Nocq's book

Agitation for a larger appreciation of the industrial and decorative arts in France began in the third quarter of the century. In 1864 the Union Centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'industrie was founded, at a time when the French were looking over their shoulders at the commercial success of British applied arts, which were making heavy inroads into what the French had considered their special realm. At first a private venture of manufacturers, collectors and a few artists, by the late 1880s the Union had transformed itself into a quasi-official institution, the Union Centrale des arts décoratifs, led by collectors, government officials, museum curators and producers.

The earlier Union Centrale wished to encourage artists and patrons to deny the traditional separation of the high realm of beauty from the industrial arts, indeed

to collaborate with the commercial producers of the useful arts. By 1890, however, the revised Union Centrale instead championed the orthodoxy that subordinated crafts to the fine arts.¹⁰ Its adherents, led by the institutional leaders of the arts, urged artisans to elevate themselves by using the powers of artistic imagination. Their ideal was rooted in luxury crafts, which emphasized individual creativity over industrial production. The eighteenth century provided their preferred models for the crafts, a customary preference that was bitterly denounced by most of the artists who replied to Nocq.

Well before Nocq's *enquête*, the Union Centrale and its *Revue des arts décoratifs* had emphasized hand-crafted luxury products, rather than emulating other nations by promoting progressive uses of industrial production. Silverman and Nancy Troy have demonstrated that this was an attempt to retain French hegemony of *objets de luxe* in the face of competition from abroad.¹¹ One sign of the prevailing conservatism is the sour critiques of the opening of Siegfried Bing's *Maison de l'Art Nouveau* in December 1895 by Geffroy, Alexandre and the reviewer for *La Revue des arts décoratifs*.¹² That same year, a permanent site was finally chosen for the Musée des arts décoratifs, following a long campaign led by the Union Centrale. Because of its conservative leadership and outlook, the future museum was not welcomed by any of the artists among Nocq's respondents.

Another symptom of the rise of the decorative arts was the close attention that French artists paid to contemporary British and Belgian art. In addition to his favourable comments on both countries' production in his book, Nocq wrote several articles on them in *La Revue des arts décoratifs* in 1895 and 1896, with special praise for Morris, Crane, Gustave Serrurier and Henry van de Velde.¹³ The influence of Morris and British Arts and Crafts mushroomed in France in the early 1890s. Toulouse-Lautrec's short letter to Nocq begins: 'I think that one only has to look to William Morris for an answer to all your questions [...]'.¹⁴ And Ernest Duez, in his interview with Nocq, warmly praised British decorative arts and was even worried that the French would go too far in imitating the British: 'And so there are customers who descend in droves on Maple and Liberty. They are right because there they will find the furniture and textiles that they will not yet see anywhere else at all.'¹⁵ Nocq himself was so impressed by the British that he pursued his *enquête* in England, going there in August 1895, when he was converting the replies from his survey into a book. He marvelled at British exhibitions, shops and domestic interiors, and he interviewed Morris and Crane.

As for Belgium, close ties between Paris and Brussels assured Nocq of a good hearing there. Five Belgians became involved in his survey (Buls, de Breux, Adolphe Crespin, Paul Hankar and Serrurier), and both *Le Journal de Bruxelles* and *L'Art moderne* published accounts of it.¹⁶ *L'Art moderne* was a major progressive journal that had close ties with the Parisian vanguard beginning in the middle 1880s, when it championed Seurat and the neo-impressionists. It reprinted Nocq's questions

on 9 September 1894, and in subsequent issues that autumn it published lengthy excerpts from many of the replies that he had received. Editorial glosses make it clear that *L'Art moderne* favoured the medievalizing views of Grasset and other respondents as well as the socialist ideals of William Morris. The latter was even more prominent in Belgium than in France. It was he who inspired co-operative workshops formed by Henry van de Velde and Serrurier (Van de Velde wrote for *L'Art moderne*). By 1894 there was already among Belgian artists a cohesive style based on artistic collaboration, which foretold the slightly later Art Nouveau in Paris (Van de Velde designed interiors in Bing's eponymous Maison de l'Art Nouveau). Van de Velde, Serrurier, and Morris participated in the first exhibition of La Libre Esthétique in Brussels in February and March 1894, and so did eleven of the French artists who responded to Nocq's questions.¹⁷ This explains why a number of them referred to the examples set by exhibitors at La Libre Esthétique, often comparing them to the objects shown at the annual Salon du Champ-de-Mars in Paris, in which they also participated (this salon had been inaugurated in 1891 with the mandate to exhibit the industrial arts alongside the fine arts).

Artists as witnesses

Nocq published five questions for his investigation in *Le Journal des artistes* on 2 September 1894:

'Do you think that the tendency evident among certain artists, notably at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars, to apply their talent as painters and sculptors to the ornamentation of practical objects is a symptom of a renaissance in our industrial arts?

'Is there a new style (in France or in other countries)?

'If a new style exists, what are its characteristic elements?

'If it does not exist, under what conditions do you think it could come into being?

'Is there good reason for the producer to try only to satisfy public taste or, on the contrary, should he try to influence and direct it?'¹⁸

The idea of a new style was in the air because of the increased prominence since 1890 of 'the decorative' in the fine arts and new interest in the decorative and applied arts. However, few of Nocq's respondents felt that current conditions favoured the rise of a new style that would rely on a bridging-over of the gap between applied arts and fine arts. Many of them had looked forward to the government's programme for the international exhibition of 1900, but when it was announced in 1894, not long before Nocq launched his inquiry, they were bitterly disappointed because it perpetuated the lowly classification of the applied arts. In his letter to Nocq that autumn, the architect and writer Frantz Jourdain

denounced the state, which, 'cynically, has put the clock back for the World's Fair of 1900 by reassigning objects of art to the industrial category.'¹⁹ It is true that many of Nocq's witnesses recognized a few welcome signs of change and often referred to a new era on the horizon, but they agreed that the objects shown at the Salon du Champ-de-Mars and La Libre Esthétique were isolated works of individuals. No matter how praiseworthy, they did not constitute a unified style and there were few signs of artistic collaboration. Charpentier made the sensible observation that 'there could be a style that we would know nothing about, as we are too closely involved ourselves in the movement that we would like to review and explain.'²⁰

Underlying nearly all of the reactions to Nocq's survey was the belief that the decorative arts had long been in decline, hence the need for a renewal. Jourdain was especially outraged at the eclectic imitation of classical styles, 'our dreadful obsession for stuffing cadavers and scraping up funerary ashes'.²¹ This eclecticism was so widespread, he lamented, that the Americans, who had the advantage of being deprived of a historic past, tried to prove their equality with Europe by using academic models to construct the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. He and other respondents faulted architects in particular because they only made 'mean and pretentious pastiches of past architecture',²² as Serrurier expressed it, and yet they dominated public taste to which other artists had to conform. The sculptor and furniture-designer Rupert Carabin (ill.8) spoke from the heart when he told Nocq that: 'Wealthy people do not buy a sideboard without consulting their architect. The architect, who is incapable of inventing anything, has built a bizarre house where a Louis XV room is followed by a medieval one [...]. One is no longer in one's home, one is in a museum or, rather, in a bric-a-brac shop.'²³ Bracquemond and the Belgians Hankar and Crespin were among others who made the same points with bitter energy.

Another characteristic that linked many of Nocq's artists was medievalism, stemming from the Romantic era and closely tied to naturalism. In part the legacy of the architect and writer Viollet-le-Duc, it had gained new energy in the decade before Nocq's survey. The Musée de Cluny, formerly private, became a public museum in 1885, and in 1893 the Louvre opened its medieval wing. Toward the end of the century medievalism was borne along on the rising tide of nationalism, in which Gothic architecture and sculpture were conceived as quintessentially French (as opposed to the Italianate Renaissance).²⁴ Involved also was the fear of the rapid changes brought about by modernity. This is well exemplified in Nocq's interview with his first witness, Grasset (Appendix A), which followed immediately upon his introduction to *Tendances nouvelles*. Grasset (ill. 9) voiced nearly all the issues that were played out in the remainder of the book. He doffed his hat to British precedents and admitted that there were the 'seeds of a style' ('semence d'un style') in France, but he thought that there was not yet a generally agreed style, nor even common efforts toward one. A new style would result only from 'a free evolution'



8. François-Rupert Carabin, detail of bookcase, 1890, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

(‘une libre évolution’), but this was hampered by the prevailing imitation of arts derived from the Renaissance, accompanied by the worship of scholarly knowledge. Decadence in architecture meant decadence in all the practical arts. Without mentioning the Union Centrale, Grasset spurned the learned evocations of the eighteenth-century and earlier art that it championed. The Renaissance was a disastrous epoch because it overturned the crafts and the principles of Gothic art.²⁵ To copy medieval art in the modern era would be ‘odious’, but one should, like Gothic artisans, rely on nature, ‘the book of ornamental art that one must consult’,²⁶ and on one’s imagination rather than on archaeological books (‘les livres d’archéologie’). Grasset identified good style as a consequence of modifying nature according to the materials being used, taking account of their different qualities; this was ‘truth to the medium’, in the well-worn phrase of the twentieth century.

The medievalizing aesthetic that Grasset articulated was denounced by Charles Buls, the mayor of Brussels, who wrote Nocq on 17 October 1894 after reading excerpts from his survey in *L’Art moderne*.²⁷ Buls referred to his own involvement with the arts, including his brochure of 1875, *L’Esthétique des villes*, and his addition of an industrial art school to the Belgian Académie des Beaux-Arts. He disagreed with the idea of decadence in the arts, a belief, he wrote, which resulted from the myopia that compared masterpieces of the past with everyday production of the

present. Interesting things were in fact being produced, and many objects he saw in exhibitions could rival those of ‘the best artists of Florence or Nuremberg’. He did not think that the Renaissance was bad, nor that it had destroyed Gothic art, which was already in decadence. He ridiculed the hope that one could return to medieval art. Yes, natural flora and fauna should be the inspiration of decorative art, but ‘it is their stylization, their interpretation and their decorative uses that should stimulate the imagination and serve the invention of our industrial artists.’²⁸ In sum, artists should listen to ‘their own century’s aspirations, and march with it towards the same ideal of science and democracy.’²⁹

In their polemical responses to Buisson, Grasset and de Breux reiterated the belief that Gothic principles of artistic independence and direct inspiration from nature had indeed been suppressed by the Renaissance’s imitation of the antique past, perpetuated in the present day by the hegemony of the Beaux-Arts. ‘It is to independence, to the absence of archaeological inspiration that I want us to return, as it still existed in the fifteenth century’, wrote Grasset. ‘No, it is not necessary to return to any formula, and for that reason one must absolutely not base teaching on “ancient” styles. Museums of decorative art will only be useless shops except for technical purposes.’³⁰ For Grasset, de Breux and nearly all of Nocq’s respondents, the chief evil was the imitation of past styles, sometimes shortened by the artists to the word ‘archaeology’ used derisively. Even the department store magnate

9. Eugène Grasset, *Encre Marquet*, poster, 1892



Honoré deplored the prevalence of imitated styles, although that is what sold well in his store: 'The honour of French art is at stake ... and also the need to prove our good sense Electric lights should no longer take the form of oil lamps rising up from Louis XV rococo Louis XVI did not have ... electric lights.'³¹

Buls's rebuttal to Grasset and de Breux, like his initial letter, claimed that progressive principles were indeed present in contemporary society and art, but his views were rendered conservative, if not reactionary, by the radical attacks of the younger artists. They associated Buls's idea of science and democracy with mass-produced imitations of past art sponsored by the industrial elite, whereas for them, democracy was associated with the anonymous craftsmen of the Middle Ages championed most famously by Morris. To them, Buls's 'stylisation' was unacceptable because it did not give primacy to direct inspiration from nature and could too readily succumb to the imitation of traditional forms. De Breux wrote that the nineteenth century reinstated the elitist rules and patterns of the Renaissance; he demanded a return to the ideals of Gothic art found in Fra Angelico, Masaccio, Memling and the Van Eycks. 'The democratic evolution that bears us along will lead us to these invigorating sources, because gothic art, made for everyone, was itself democratic.'³² (For all of Nocq's respondents, 'gothic' incorporated Italian art of the quattrocento.)

If architects and industrialized imitations were at fault, so was the schooling of artisans and artists. There was wide agreement among Nocq's respondents that it was not 'style' but the basic crafts that had to be addressed. Lucien Falize, a successful and well-known jeweller, thought that too many objects were designed without regard for the techniques and materials involved. To succeed, artists 'ought to put their trust in the collaboration of workers, of simple workers without pretensions but experienced in the particular demands of each trade.'³³ Lautrec put it most succinctly: 'Fewer artists and more *good workers*. In a word, more craft.' Carabin told Nocq that he was so disgusted by the curriculum of the Ecole Boulle that he had refused an invitation to teach there. Graduating students 'will have just enough superficial skill for current stylish decoration of the usual furniture suppliers. This school can only satisfy the greed of the manufacturers.'³⁴ Overwhelmed by imitations of traditional artefacts placed before them, students were too far removed from nature. They were also pressed into specialized routines that denied them the full range of the crafts. Oscar Roty would school the student in drawing, modelling and engraving, and 'I would require him, for a break, to labour like a worker in all the professions that touch upon his art,'³⁵ including smelting and forging metals.

Several firm convictions underlie all the negatives that dominate Nocq's texts. Like Grasset, as well as participants in many reform movements earlier in the century, most of Nocq's witnesses believed that the proper 'school' was nature itself. By opposing nature to Renaissance rules, they were recapitulating the dialectic

of romanticism vs. neoclassicism which put naturalism at the heart of progressive art in the nineteenth century. As Art Nouveau matured in Nocq's period, its fluid, floral forms drew upon several styles, each of which was said to be derived from nature: medieval art, the rococo, romantic medievalism and Japanese art. Unmediated study of nature should replace the forms derived from traditional styles because this would release the artisans' creative powers by freeing them from recipes imposed by artistic authorities. Carabin would eliminate from teaching 'all plaster casts, all antique models'. For copying, he would have teachers ask students 'to copy by modelling natural objects, plants, animals, draped cloths, human figures, [then] make casts of these copies and teach them woodworking by having them sculpt their own models.'³⁶

Allied with naturalism was the idea of being faithful to the artists' materials. For Dampit, the student should be taught to adapt the medium 'to composition and to the destination of the piece; never to make in wood something appropriate for plaster, never to forge iron to resemble casting.'³⁷ For Georges Auriol, pewter 'is an admirable material, but how many people know that pewter is only beautiful when matt? We see beginners polishing pewter like helmets and others trying to make it iridescent. If your pewter resembles mother-of-pearl or tintypes, then it is no longer pewter.'³⁸

What hope could artists have that the public would learn to prefer simple forms to the reigning 'bric-a-brac'? None, according to nearly all of Nocq's artists. 'The public, in general, is stupid,' wrote Rivière. 'If you show someone a bronze vase, very fancy, next to a simple but beautiful Japanese fired vase, his choice will surely fall on the fancy vase because, in his complete ignorance of beauty, he confuses the elegant with the complicated [...].'³⁹ For Nocq's artists, public taste should not be courted, and mere fashion had to be avoided. 'There is no greater enemy of art than fashion,' wrote Serrurier, 'and I think it absolutely necessary that the artist not make himself the servant of this absurd and unintelligent thing which is fashion. [...]. It is up to him to impose on the public a more sincere aesthetic that is more attuned to healthy rationality.'⁴⁰ How could one impress the public with the quality of good art? One of the few optimists was Jourdain, who wrote that artists should address themselves 'not only to refined people, collectors, amateurs, but to workers, simple people, passers-by who will love what they see everywhere and often'. In words that foretell Léger's view in the next generation, he added that: 'The best school is the street: it is in the street, in shop windows, the most modest as well as the most lavish, that it becomes necessary to exhibit pretty everyday objects, fabrics, furniture, jewellery, trinkets.' In this way, high quality would not be limited to the wealthy few, but 'it would inevitably infiltrate all social layers; the ground is prepared, one must sow the seed.'⁴¹

Most of Nocq's other artists were either vague about how to elevate public taste or downright pessimistic. Jean Baffier was among the pessimists who feared that

fashion was too pervasive to be overcome, because art 'is only a result, a consequence, if you prefer, of the state of a people's soul, and naturally it is not possible to separate art from the social order in which it develops.' The social order was ruled by decadence, he wrote, because it is based upon 'principles of decomposition, because it is by the disintegration of every belief, of every ideal, that public powers find recruits.' If a few good men arise, they are frustrated 'because the public, universal suffrage if you prefer, which is the force, follows the sophists, that is, those who, because they are incapable of creating, make themselves destroyers or pasticheurs.'⁴²

Most of Baffier's fellow artists complained that individual craft workers were not likely to create a new, unified style because art was a social product, and society was corrupt. Degas's friend Jean Raffaëlli agreed, but he blamed decline on the loss of the pre-modern hierarchy in which monarchs, popes and nobles embodied a whole people's beliefs and therefore used their authority to encourage a unified and pervasive style (he particularly valued the eighteenth century). Blaming the industrial bourgeoisie for the loss of good taste, Raffaëlli, Baffier and the political right all longed for pre-Revolutionary days. However, Serrurier, the Belgian imbued with Morris's principles, gave Nocq an opposite point of view. He agreed that contemporary society was foundering under its decadence, but he aligned himself with believers in an anarchist utopia, like Paul Signac and Camille Pissarro.⁴³ He wrote Nocq that: 'The intellectual and social society in which we live is clearly destined for a transformation in the near future. An evolution is underway that will likely lead to profound changes in the present order of things and if artists commit the error of putting their talent at the service of this temporary decadence, they will see their works fatally condemned to sink with the regime whose end is approaching. In a word, one should not be working for a society that is about to disappear.' Artists cannot be divorced from society, therefore a new style can only emerge 'simultaneously with a new moral and philosophical order'.⁴⁴

Curiously absent from Nocq's witnesses is any attention to the role of women in the decorative arts, all the more surprising because of its prominence since the Union Centrale's 'Exhibition of Women's Art' (Exposition des arts de la femme) in 1892.⁴⁵ Only one of Nocq's artists, Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac, raised the issue of women and the decorative arts, and his was a special case. Unlike the other artists who endorsed a basic simplicity of form, Montesquiou-Fezensac wrote Nocq that form alone could not suffice: 'Innovative elements in furniture will be colour, delicately apportioned, – and especially something symbolic and thoughtful, brought about by the decoration playing and commenting upon a text, an idea.'⁴⁶ Montesquiou-Fezensac was a symbolist poet as well as an interior decorator, and he predicted the dominance of erotically charged female images in Art Nouveau after 1895: 'What one can affirm is that *quaere mulierem*, the *eternal feminine*, will be the law of the new style, as it was of earlier ones, and that modern

Woman, who has understood how to create new accoutrements, will surely in the future be called to mind by the appearance of new furniture that talented artists will adapt to her.⁴⁷ The last phrase could well apply to the serpentine nude women that Carabin sculpted for his furniture, but that artist did not mention women in his interview with Nocq.

Art and industry

In different terms, nearly all of Nocq's artists lamented the fragmentation of labour and of life (Baffier's 'decomposition' and 'disintegration'), which was nothing other than the consequence of market capitalism. Honoré, the department store manager, indicted the market, which used modern methods to produce cheap goods of poor design. He and Roty were the only ones to use the economists' phrase 'the division of labour', but the other respondents were all too aware of its consequences. Silverman has outlined the changes in the marketing of art, using



10. Alexandre Charpentier,
Tisane pot, 1892, pewter,
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

furniture as her leading example.⁴⁸ By the early 1890s, the rise of department stores had displaced specialized makers of furniture and, with it, their sales shops and methods of production. The new emporia demanded cheaper furniture of a few standard types, thereby reducing the role of workshops that made objects of high craft. A few traditional workshops survived, but most artisans took part in a kind of industrial production in which they did routine tasks that deprived them of good pay, creative initiative and experience in many aspects of their crafts; their employers had to cater to department stores with little chance of showing wares directly to individual clients.

How could decorative artists function in these conditions? A few, like Carabin, Damp, Falize, Grasset and Serrurier, had established reputations that brought them clients, but even they had to worry about finding outlets for their work. Most of those who answered Nocq's questionnaire had to labour outside the dominant market system. Charpentier (ill. 10), a man of the left, thought that artists should band together in their own sales shop and proposed that, like the exhibitors in Brussels's *La Libre Esthétique*, his comrades at the Champs-de-Mars should post prices on each object. This was a frank admission that the craftsman was a loner, victim of the fragmentations of the capitalist system. However, to exhibit their wares as so many pots and pans on a store shelf was unpalatable to most artists, who wished to be treated as makers of unique objects. Baffier, lacking faith in beneficial social change, wrote Nocq that artists had to take pride in uncompromised ideals and consequent poverty, an attitude that marked many artists across the century (Van Gogh and Gauguin were notable examples).

Was there no hope that crafts could survive by working more closely with modern industry instead of spurning it? Among Nocq's artists, only the Dutchman Zilcken had such a hope. He condemned the eclecticism of contemporary decorative arts, but at least could look to a future when the promise of machines would bear fruit. In machines, he wrote Nocq, 'I see a concentration of forces brought about by a supreme simplicity of details, and this very concentration, produced by reduced, synthetic lines, gives new forms that are not devoid of style and are sometimes very pure.'⁴⁹ His view was virtually unthinkable in France at that time, but it foretells *De Stijl*, purism and constructivism in the 1920s. Of course craft workers used some machinery, which they found useful when it was under their direct control and not a feature of factory production. However, for decades 'machine' was the word that raised artists' fears of mass-produced industry and their dislike of its products. De Breux called the machine 'anti-aesthetic' and Damp, addressing his contemporaries, wrote that: 'Our century is the triumph of the engineer: rush with your steam engines, speak with your telephones, travel up and down the earth like a bolt of lightning, but you will not take a single step in the sky [...].'⁵⁰ None of Nocq's artists suggested that good design was itself a solution, because it would be carried out by procedures that reduced workers to unthinking

automata. 'Machine' and 'industry' made them think of the drastic reduction of craft autonomy and its human costs. To collaborate with industry, they reasoned, would further diminish their creativity and the exercise of their unique skills.

Despite such reservations, not many agreed with Grasset and Baffier that they could work entirely outside the industrialized arts. De Breux recognized that Morris and Crane produced machine-made wallpapers at very low prices, but lamented the absence of fruitful collaborations between artists and industry in Belgium and France. Rivière, the youngest of Nocq's correspondents, despised mechanical production but thought that one had to accept its methods 'for lack of anything better'. A specialist in colour lithography, he wanted to replace hideous mass-produced wallpaper with 'large lithographs, in quiet, intelligent tones', and to educate 'the eyes of children by introducing these great wall posters in schools, instead of the wretched paintings that one sees there today.'⁵¹ He had little hope in the 'stupid' public, but artists should persist in putting forth good design that might eventually become acceptable.

The pundits

Faced with the parlous condition of their crafts, Nocq's artists therefore did not think well of collaborating with industry. His professional writers, however, all of whom were involved with the Union Centrale, put more hope in such partnerships, partly because they did not have to live alongside comrades who were unemployed or underemployed. The exchange that pitted Buisson against Grasset and de Breux, already mentioned, shows how the willingness to accept industry was seen as conservative, even reactionary, by artists clamouring for new social conditions for their profession. Nocq's professional writers – Alexandre, Champier, Geffroy, Goncourt, Havard, Roger Marx and Uzanne – were also made conservative in the same manner, although they all wanted to close the gap between crafts and fine arts. In his preface, the critic Geffroy, friend of Monet and Cézanne, not only defended the 'archaeology' of books and libraries attacked by several artists, but praised Nocq for accepting the future alliance of art and industry. Nocq's views were only made explicit in the second half of *Tendances nouvelles*, but he foretold them in his marginal comments in *Le Journal des artistes*. After Rivière told him that 'mechanical production is a horrible evil,' Nocq asked him: 'Is there not room to accept this inevitable evil and seek to mitigate it by supplying industry with the most artistic models?'⁵²

Conservative from the perspective of Grasset's or Charpentier's views of the industrial arts, Geffroy and the other pundits were judged liberal and progressive by most contemporaries. Nationalists, they were anxious to restore France's once paramount place in the decorative arts and agreed that the best way was to

encourage new styles. Like most leading government officials by the mid-1890s, they castigated the reproduction and imitation of traditional styles, while maintaining the essence of the eighteenth century's concept of the unity of the arts. All of the writers assumed that good objects could be produced industrially if artists supplied good designs, but of course the divorce of concept from execution, of creativity from mundane repetition, was anathema to most artisans. Good design, rather than the actual working of the craft, was the chief interest of the writers. They were usually forthright in their condemnation of institutional sclerosis that favoured the imitation of historic styles, but this did not really put them on the side of the craft workers, and they continued to regard rococo design as the great exemplar.

Edmond de Goncourt was the most famous of Nocq's respondents, not so much as novelist but as prominent promoter of the decorative arts, champion of *japonisme* and the rococo, and major collector of eighteenth-century objects, whose home was a famous example of an integrated interior. In his interview with Nocq (Appendix A), he showed his customary puckish outlook by saying that because art does not rest inert, something will come of current activity, but 'it is absolutely the end of great art.' There were only two great epochs for furniture, the Gothic and the eighteenth century. The latter produced the most elegant objects but they are not very practical. 'Pretty objects are never practical.'

In the world of decorative arts, Henry Havard was as well known as Goncourt. Havard was a prolific scholar whose books on the history and role of decorative arts in the household were favoured by the Union Centrale. *L'Art dans la maison* (1884) was adopted in 1891 by the government for use in training teachers.⁵³ Havard was unwavering in praising the eighteenth century and even retained a strong dose of the Enlightenment. 'Reason ought to dominate temperament,' he told Nocq. Nature is insufficient as model because it has to be transformed to make practical objects, and yet he warned against too much fantasy and imagination. Although his insistence upon close study of the practical needs of an object might have appealed to some artists, his interview with Nocq reveals someone even more conservative than Buisson.

Roger Marx and Arsène Alexandre were twenty years younger than Havard and more willing, even eager, to promote creative imagination and direct inspiration from nature. Both insisted that modern objects had to embody the traditional French qualities of elegance and sensual appeal. Marx, a defender of impressionism and of Seurat, was a prolific journalist and art critic. By 1889 he was also a government official in the arts administration. He campaigned successfully for a new image of the Republic on coins: Oscar Roty's new silver one-franc piece (ill. 11) appeared in 1895.⁵⁴ In his somewhat tiresome interview with Nocq, Marx insisted that men of letters had taken the leading role in promoting the upsurge of the decorative arts and – astonishingly if you were Grasset or Charpentier – 'the



11. Oscar Roty, *Sower*
(on one-franc piece); the design
(shown here on a coin minted in 1960)
continued in use for most of
the twentieth century

emancipation of art workers'. He said that critical comments on contemporary objects could be made to the artists themselves but should not be published lest they frighten the public away from purchasing them. Here spoke the writer, believing that he sympathized with the artists but in fact who was far more concerned with his own profession.

Alexandre likewise blended progressive and conservative, although in a slightly different mixture. An enterprising editor and art critic of quasi-official standing, like Roger Marx, he was a friend of Toulouse-Lautrec and one of the rare defenders of Cézanne when he exhibited in 1895. A leading *japoniste*, he turned increasingly to the decorative arts after 1890, often writing in terms welcome to the slowly liberalizing Union Centrale; he was a frequent contributor to *La Revue des arts décoratifs*. To Nocq he defended the work of the art industry in the first half of the century despite the artists' round attacks upon it, and he deplored attention to this 'imaginary evil'. Attempts to improve it led to decline because schools emphasized style rather than method. He ended the interview with a call for reform in education but said it would take many years to have an effect. Elsewhere he revealed a limited endorsement of modern crafts when he disparaged Bing's Maison de l'Art Nouveau in *Le Figaro*. He used particularly repulsive terms that give a good idea of rampant nationalism on the eve of the Dreyfus Affair: 'That all smells of the depraved Englishman, the drug-laced Jewess or the wily Belgian, or a nice salad of these three poisons.'⁵⁵

Victor Champier, editor of *La Revue des arts décoratifs* and frequent contributor, also disparaged Bing's new shop, but in far more moderate terms. As spokesman for the Union Centrale, he had favoured the shift after 1890 away from historic styles toward modern art. Emile Gallé's floral and serpentine glass vases were among his preferred objects; they honoured the principles of rococo art while expressing modern sensations. In his 1894 interview with Nocq, Champier appeared to be less concerned with the idea of decline and decadence that helped fuel Alexandre's xenophobia, but like Alexandre and others he was worried about foreign competition. The Exposition universelle of 1889 made the French see 'foreigners copying most of our designs, and as these designs had hardly changed

over the years, foreigners fashioned themselves on French forms, and competition became dangerous [...].'⁵⁶ He wanted the French to free themselves from overdependence upon historic styles in order to recover their leading role in international trade. He was the most optimistic of Nocq's pundits, because when he visited art schools he found signs of a welcome and rapid evolution. He believed that Grasset's students were forming a rising generation based on respect for their materials and a rigorous method. Unlike Grasset, however, he welcomed machinery for its labour-saving virtues and believed it would permit good art at lower cost for the masses, whereas hand-crafts were expensive and limited to an elite.

The last of Nocq's pundits, Octave Uzanne, had been a prominent writer on women's fashions since the 1880s, especially on eighteenth-century aristocratic dress and its contemporary relevance.⁵⁷ For all his devotion to women's fashions, Uzanne would have kept women in their customary roles as muses of domestic interiors. More progressive was his vehement attack on contemporary taste. He lamented to Nocq that 'bad taste is the distinctive mark of our bourgeoisie [...].' He condemned public institutions for deploying judgements 'by committees, commissions and meetings of official inspectors of impotent minds', and added that France lacked the cohesiveness that underlay British and American successes in the decorative arts. 'Anglo-Saxons have an indisputable advantage over us: *solidarity*; this advantage is found in everything that could contribute to the raising-up of national genius, whereas we apply ourselves to the development of envy and hatred of talents [...]. Every new, original and serious enterprise has against it, in France, the omnipotence of jealous mediocrity, the fright of officials and the bewitching fatality born of a general desire for failure; to make great things has become impossible.'⁵⁸ Uzanne could only cling to the hope that brave souls might defy the prevailing mediocrity and band together to form collective work that would reveal each participant's individuality. If they did so, then 'beauty ends always by imposing itself.'

Nocq's own essay

The second part of Nocq's book, nearly one-third of its length, consists of ten numbered sections of his own 'Notes on the progress of the industrial arts'. The first eight were published in *Le Journal des artistes*, and the ninth in *La Revue des arts décoratifs* in September 1895. The tenth was introduced in the book, following months of reflection and a trip to England, where he interviewed Morris and Crane. Except for the first, the titles of his ten parts form a good synopsis of his ideas:

'I New tendencies.

II The fashion for old styles only exists because of the ignorance of the public.

- The greed of some manufacturers finds its profit there; they also try to stifle development and progress in the industrial arts.
- III The influence and actions of these manufacturers in exhibitions.
 - IV Their influence in professional schools.
 - V It is regrettable that they have disseminated to the public a very vague knowledge of styles, that is, fashions of former days.
 - VI The Union Centrale and its congress.
 - VII The need to extend artistic property rights to decorative inventions.
 - VIII Inscribing the names of industrial collaborators. Ridiculous demands of the Federation of art workers.
 - IX Progress of industrial arts in England.
 - X The return of artists to industrial decoration; a firm alliance of art and industry thanks to mechanical production.⁵⁹

In his sometimes polemical 'Notes', Nocq abandoned his attempts at editorial objectivity. From the first to the tenth part he supported the necessity of collaboration with modern industrial processes. In his opening section he writes that there are indeed 'new tendencies'. He is encouraged by some excellent new work by individual artists and by the greatly increased attendance at exhibitions of decorative arts. Promising, too, is the enlightened patronage of a few merchants who encourage good art and who import British wares. However, if these businessmen and the public are on the verge of rallying to new art, 'it will take longer for artists to change' (p. 138).⁶⁰ Most fine artists still disdain the decorative arts, and too few follow the examples of Duez and Roty, who make objects that have practical commercial appeal. Agreeing with Geffroy, and with a jab at Grasset and other medievalizers, Nocq thought that one must leave behind nostalgia for the past and 'make useful things at the present day, for the present day'.⁶¹

Sections II to VI are spirited condemnations of imitation and eclecticism, 'these objects of fake luxury, archaeological and pretentious',⁶² that rule the commercial world and obstruct the rise of good art. Current art instruction is of no help; he agrees with Carabin that curricula like that of the Ecole Boulle merely perpetuate outmoded styles. In section VI, Nocq roundly condemns the Union Centrale, which actually has thwarted the goals it proposes to implement. Its museum (in temporary quarters) is merely an 'academy of taste' without significant modern objects. Its administrators are collectors and merchants who fear that their profits will suffer if their outdated wares are supplanted by modern objects. Their judgement of contemporary decorative art is appalling, and good work is accepted only when men like Jourdain and Grasset fight for it.

Nocq had little faith in attempts to liberalize the Union Centrale and was not encouraged by the Congrès des arts décoratifs of 1894, sponsored by the Union Centrale and a number of government officials and fine arts administrators.⁶³

Nocq held his distance, but actually agreed with their outlook. They promoted the creativity of individual artisans, not their banding together to fight the capitalist market, and they favoured high-quality crafts, not mechanization or increased efficiency. Although they decried mere imitation and praised a communitarian ideal of arts and crafts, the leaders of the Congress eliminated the radical elements of Morris's ideals, and so did Nocq.

In his comments on the Congress, Nocq took umbrage at two of the issues it raised, the right of individual artisans to sign their work (see above, the title of Section VII), and the creation of unions of art workers. Silverman and Froissart-Pezone have shown that demands for copyright for decorative artists had been raised in 1890, but Nocq thought that this would be logical only for makers of the whole object and would reinforce the concept of elevating the decorative arts to the personal creativity of the fine arts with no regard for new industrial processes.⁶⁴ Nocq sympathized with artisans' wishes to have their work recognized, especially because it was credited not to them but to those who marketed it. However, he wrote that the Congress spent too much time demonstrating that photography was an art and issued only a vague wish to have art objects added to existing copyright laws. How can copyright be assigned to each artist who contributes to a collective work? One would need to engrave a list 'as on the July Column'.⁶⁵ Nocq wrote that he had laid the issue before a number of Parisian lawyers but had no responses in time for his book. This showed only that he was trying to maintain sympathy with the art workers: in fact he opposed copyright. Many sculptors and painters labour for others, he wrote, and only cultivate their own personal production in after-work hours and leisure time, so decorative art workers should do the same. 'The worker really in love with the material transformed by his hands, whether he makes a God, a table or a sink, is already rewarded by the pleasure he feels in taming the material that he loves and that he compels to clothe the imagined form. Of what importance then is the signature?'⁶⁶

Nocq did not equivocate in his opposition to unions for art workers, which he associated with the copyright issue. He regretted that Maurice Barrès, the maverick socialist (not yet on the far right), offered support for unionization and defended copyright so that artisans could guard their 'personality'. There are several 'sociétés' for 'artist-decorators', Nocq observed, so they have outlets and do not need unions. If they argued for higher salaries, he would support them, but they do not complain about their pay, and he was convinced that the idea of signing their objects 'serves as pretext for the creation of new unions of art workers [...]'. Every new union is going to dig the ditch deeper, accentuate the differences between artisans and artists, an unjust and outmoded classification that all our efforts are directed towards eliminating.⁶⁷

Nocq obviously was afraid that in unionizing, decorative art workers would become associated with the radical left. Like the Union Centrale, he wanted to have

the decorative arts classified with the fine arts. He tried to be fair to the union cause by reprinting an article by Paul Lagarde from *La Cocarde*, 'which at this moment is the official organ of the Fédération des Ouvriers d'art'. Lagarde had published his essay to respond to Nocq's 'Notes' in *Le Journal des artistes*.⁶⁸ Lagarde wrote that for a few days *La Cocarde* had opened its pages to the Fédération and Maurice Barrès. Unions, he said, were necessary to replace the intermediaries between the artist and the public. They could bring freedom to the artisans, because socialism demands liberty and justice for all, permitting each to produce that of which he is capable. In his rebuttal Nocq disclosed more of his conservatism. Many art workers only apply their skills to imitative work, and 'all their routine labour is so predictable and regulated that one only needs to turn the handle to "play the melody"'.⁶⁹ If he cultivated his interior dream, a real artist – and they are few – could not be prevented from producing a work that would then be recognized, so there is no need for a union. Falling back on the ideology of individualism, Nocq wrote that what counts is the work of Morris, Grasset, Crane, Dampt, Bracquemond, Roty, 'the principal artisan-artists of the Champ-de-Mars and the Libre Esthétique'. It is they who lead the way, not the multitude of ordinary workers in the Fédération des Ouvriers d'art.

When Nocq wrote that to compensate the pains of their labour, artisans can take joy and pride in their completed work, he was deliberately echoing Morris. However, this turned Morris on his head. For Morris, capitalism did not let the worker find joy in work because the market system denied the proper relation of worker to fellow workers and the product. In his lecture published in *La Société nouvelle* in 1894 as 'L'Art du peuple', Morris said that luxury should be banished from homes because it cannot exist without slavery; its elimination would free both master and serf to enjoy life. The trouble comes from 'the savage ardour of the civilized world, engaged to excess in chasing after capital and on the battle fields'.⁷⁰ By stripping away the radical component of Morris's thought and limiting him to a sentimental communitarianism, Nocq was like so many French observers, including supposed disciples of Morris like Jean Lahor.⁷¹ Morris was attractive to the French both for his ideas and for the products of his workshop, exhibited and sold in Paris and much admired, and it was with him in mind that Nocq went to London in August 1895. The ninth section of his 'Notes' was first published in *La Revue des arts décoratifs* in September 1895, as 'From London', and dated 16 August 1895. He began his account by saying that the English were ahead of the French. 'Order, logic, simplicity: there is the source, I believe, of the prosperity of the English decorative industry.'⁷² He entered many houses and apartments of different social classes and found everywhere an enviable simplicity instead of the pretentious complications of French interiors. Even a locomotive, varnished and painted in bright colours, revealed to him the British penchant for good style. 'In the street, the shop windows are clothed in flat tones, nearly always light, witnesses to a true sobriety and

elegance that contrasts with the gilding, the artificial, pretentious and archaeological luxury of our Parisian shops. Over here, no scenery, no outmoded arabesques; fake marble and stucco pastry are everywhere banished.⁷³

Nocq credits the Pre-Raphaelites, led by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, with starting the movement that culminated in the Arts and Crafts. Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, he acknowledges, have a cult for the fifteenth century, but they take its principles and do not copy it. Walter Crane's illustrations and textile designs, George Frampton's sculptures, C. F. Voysey's architecture and George Haîté's designs for wallpaper all show that the movement has gone beyond Pre-Raphaelite archaism. Nocq wrote that Morris was the most influential of all contemporaries, but in his interview (Appendix A), Morris regretted that the English did not listen to him. Nocq could not get him to enunciate his principles, so he turned his questions to the Kelmscott Press. He provoked the Englishman to give a detailed explanation of the typeface he had created, which was for Nocq an example of the logic and simplicity of all Morris's work. As for his theories, 'we all had read them in *Craintes et Espérances pour l'Art* [*Hopes and Fears for Art*, 1882]'.⁷⁴ More forthcoming was Walter Crane (Appendix A), who spoke frankly as a socialist hoping to favour 'local progress and variety of little communities'. Artists' goals and those of profit-making industry are not compatible according to Crane, but at least there has been more good work produced in England than on the Continent, where forms from the later Renaissance still dominate the decorative arts.

In his interviews with other British artists (he did not name them), Nocq was impressed by their broad agreements, a solidarity that the French ought to observe. The same solidarity characterized the manufacturers, who formed a real alliance with the artists. He interviewed 'M. Essex, the well-known maker of wallpaper', who told him that there were no disagreements at all with the artists who supplied his designs. To test this claim, Nocq attended his table at his club. There a young sculptor working for an important manufacturer of ceramics told him that he would be fired immediately if he modelled some motif after old styles. In response to Nocq's fears that in adopting the latest art, Essex's business could suffer, the manufacturer said that 'the public does not yet completely understand, but small business, whose support is important, already turns to us; little by little it comes to the manufacturers of the new art.'⁷⁵

Nocq's witnesses like Grasset or Serrurier would have been intrigued by his report from England, but not at all by the final section of his 'Notes'. Too many artists, he writes there, regret the past without recalling that medieval art was based on faith and resignation, and Renaissance art upon a cohesion imposed by monarchy. One cannot return to those earlier social conditions, which are incompatible with modern democracy, so artists should not remain 'like men of decadence'.⁷⁶ They should aid progress by teaching the masses the ideals of beauty in the most humble of daily objects, and for this purpose they should collaborate

with machine production. It is not evil, 'it is excellent provided that one does not continue to demand the improvised, picturesque and hesitant qualities of manual labour, but that one invents forms suitable to the rigorous work of machines.'⁷⁷

This last phrase echoes the views of his Dutch respondent Zilcken, who believed that machinery had its own logic and would produce entirely new forms with economy and style. Using machines to deliver products of good design to the masses was not a new idea, because Henry Cole, the principal organizer of the Crystal Palace exhibition in 1851, promoted utilitarian design in machine production and the alliance of artists with industry.⁷⁸ Cole's utilitarian view was opposed by Ruskin and then by Morris, but the latter was not wholly averse to the machine. Like Fourier and Owen earlier in the century, Morris believed that factories could find a place in the ideal society if they were established away from industrial cities and designed by artists as integral community structures. If controlled by the artist, and not the artist's master, machinery could become a useful tool to supplant aspects of brute labour without denying individual craftsmanship.⁷⁹

Nocq found this view congenial but did not take the further step that Morris took in analyzing the capitalist system, that is, tying the machine to the profit-making market that degraded creative craftsmanship. This was the view of Grasset, de Breux and Serrurier. Nocq, like so many others who hoped for a renaissance of the decorative arts, acknowledged the bad consequences of current machine production, but, despite this admission, he did not think that society needed reform for the workers' sake. Instead he concluded his book with a conservative injunction for artists to collaborate with industry. In a naive and pious sentence near the end of his book, he wrote that: 'Thanks to mechanical production, their works will be put at the reach of the largest number and will therefore serve social progress.'⁸⁰ His final words return to the mournful phrase of Edmond de Goncourt, followed by a surprisingly cynical remark. 'It is the end of so-called great art. Maybe, but what of it?'⁸¹

APPENDIX A

Texts from *Tendances nouvelles*

Edmond de Goncourt ('Visite à Edmond de Goncourt',
Tendances nouvelles, pp. 108-11)

After telling Goncourt about his survey, Nocq initiated the interview by asking to see Goncourt's Japanese pewter vase. Nocq described the vase, then gave the following dialogue:

'Pouvez-vous me dire au juste comment c'est fait?' Je garde un silence prudent. 'Eh bien! Personne n'a pu expliquer au juste la fabrication de mon vase ... Hayashi n'en connaît pas un semblable dans tout le Japon.'

– Mais vous n'avez ici, monsieur, que des objets d'exception; j'ai admiré en montant les Kakémonos de l'escalier ...

– 'Oui, ils sont beaux ... et c'est bien fini, maintenant, tout ce qui nous vient aujourd'hui du Japon est abominable.'

– Pensez-vous que le Japon ait sur nos industries d'art une influence décisive?

– 'Le Japon a une grande influence, c'est certain: mais elle n'est pas ce que j'attendais; au lieu de s'en inspirer, d'en chercher l'esprit, on le copie textuellement.'

– Croyez-vous que le retour d'un certain nombre d'artistes vers l'art mobilier, au Champ-de-Mars, par exemple, soit un heureux symptôme?

– 'Je suis avec beaucoup d'intérêt ces manifestations et je ne crois pas qu'une somme considérable d'efforts d'hommes de talent ainsi groupés puisse rester stérile. Du reste, comme toutes choses, l'art est soumis à des lois de marche en avant: marche plus ou moins accentuée à certains moments, mais qui ne saurait s'arrêter, car l'immobilité n'existe pas. Je crois que quelque chose va surgir du mouvement actuel; quoi? ... mais, par exemple, c'est absolument la fin du grand art.'

– Vous croyez donc, monsieur, qu'il y a un grand art et des arts mineurs?

– 'Il y a certainement des catégories ... entre les hommes. Je crois qu'il y a de grands et de petits artistes; le grand art, c'est l'art des grands artistes; c'est l'art de Tintoret, de Rembrandt et de Velasquez. Le XVIII^e siècle est déjà une époque moindre. Enfin l'esthétique de Turner est une esthétique d'art industriel: Le Turner de Groult est un flambé.⁸² Cette constatation ne m'empêche pas d'aimer passionnément cet art amoindri du XVIII^e siècle; toutes les productions, dans toutes les branches de l'art et de l'industrie, en sont délicieuses ... Au reste, il n'y a que deux époques pour l'ameublement: au Moyen Age l'époque gothique, et le XVIII^e siècle. Les meubles du XVIII^e siècle sont les plus élégants de tous. En voici là, de forme bien pure, ces fauteuils, ces chaises, je les trouve beaux, mais je dois reconnaître

qu'on y est assez mal assis. Les commodes Louis XV, avec leurs formes courbes, ne sont guère ... commodes. C'est charmant, mais on ne peut rien y ranger à son gré. Les objets jolis ne sont jamais pratiques.'

Eugène Grasset ('Chez Eugène Grasset',
Tendances nouvelles, pp. 12-15)

'Je vois dans les manifestations d'art auxquelles vous faites allusion le symptôme, non pas de la renaissance des Arts mobiliers, mais d'un désir d'y arriver: une volonté louable de faire nouveau et mieux, mais cela seulement.

Il n'y a pas là un style à proprement parler, mais peut-être la semence d'un style. L'effort est divisé, tiraillé en tous sens, sans action continue, et quant à présent, je ne vois pas le moyen d'arriver à une direction unique. Un style n'est pas produit par un effort de volonté, mais par une libre évolution ...

Le mal c'est l'archéologie. On est trop savant, on a trop remué la cendre des siècles passés, trop étudié les musées. Les monceaux d'objets d'art, de merveilles parfois entassés dans les collections, il est bon de les examiner au point de vue philosophique, mais c'est mauvais pour l'art. On est toujours trop disposé à imiter quelque chose qu'on a déjà vu; d'abord, c'est si facile! Cette recherche d'archaïsme ne date pas d'aujourd'hui, elle a commencé à la Renaissance. La Renaissance est une époque néfaste, et les premiers coupables (responsables du mal dont nous continuons à souffrir) sont les hommes qui ont favorisé son éclosion. Je pense quelquefois à nos admirables maîtres maçons, qui, ayant couvert tout le territoire de prodigieux chefs-d'œuvre, durent tant souffrir quand les Italiens sont venus, avec leurs plans, pour imposer une manière de construire et de décorer renouvelée des anciens. Nos artisans y mirent, cela se comprend, beaucoup de mauvais vouloir, firent semblant de ne pas comprendre, pour pouvoir appliquer encore, le plus longtemps possible, leur manière personnelle et traditionnelle. Enfin les Italiens triomphèrent, hélas! ils firent prévaloir leurs idées. Et depuis cette époque, nos édifices furent des superpositions d'ordres l'un sur l'autre: une embase, une colonne, un chapiteau, une frise; une base, une colonne, une autre frise, et toujours ainsi. Et c'est tout ce qu'on trouva pour remplacer le bâtiment gothique, qui pousse du sol, comme une plante, avec sa destination particulière, nettement écrite, logique de bas en haut. L'art gothique était beau, c'était un art. Les productions qui sont venues depuis sont des assemblages de clichés de l'antiquité; cela ressemble à ce discours de l'avocat de Rabelais, uniquement composé de citations. Cela peut être habile, peut-être tout ce qu'on voudra que ce soit, mais pas de l'art. La décadence de l'architecture a amené la décadence de tous les arts mobiliers.

Je crois qu'il faudrait renoncer à la science, qui n'a rien à voir dans la décoration; laisser retomber la poussière de bibliothèque et revenir au Moyen Âge, pas pour le

copier, mais pour reprendre la mouvement là où la Renaissance l'a interrompu et continuer; observer dans l'art appliqué le programme des peintres préraphaélites. Etudier le Moyen Age pour en tirer le bon sens qui est partout et se remettre à l'ouvrage avec le même bon sens et la même liberté. Mais encore une fois, copier et introduire l'art du Moyen Age dans la vie moderne, c'est odieux. Comme les artisans des époques gothiques, on suivra exclusivement son imagination et non plus les livres d'archéologie.

On trouvera dans la nature tous les éléments de décoration qu'on pourra désirer. La nature, voilà le livre d'art ornemental qu'il faut consulter. Si l'on a le respect de la matière employée, si l'on ne fait dire au fer que ce qu'il peut dire vraisemblablement; si l'on emploie le bois comme il doit être employé: si l'on tient compte du grain, du fil, de la couleur de chaque substance mise en œuvre, ce respect de la matière modifiera suffisamment les formes naturelles; cette modification logique, cette interprétation raisonnable est déjà du style.

Le producteur doit faire à sa tête. Sa fantaisie est limitée seulement par l'utilisation nécessaire de l'objet inventé.'

William Morris (from an interview in London,
in *Tendances nouvelles*, pp. 186-88)

Nocq mentions that Morris was a socialist and praises his 'principles of sound teaching'⁸³ that have been so influential. He had a long interview with him and visited his press, but Morris denied that he had any influence.

'Non! non! je n'ai aucune influence, les Anglais ne veulent pas entendre raison. Ils y viendront, j'en suis sûr, je ne suis pas un pessimiste; je sens bien qu'un renouveau artistique se prépare, mais je ne le verrai pas ... Si je travaille encore à mon âge, c'est que l'art est un somme la seule chose digne de nos efforts et la seule agréable, la seule qui m'aide à passer le temps de vie qui me reste.

Voyez-vous, nos contemporains ne s'occupent pas d'art: ils n'ont pas le temps; plus tard ils y reviendront, quand ils seront guéris de la folie du commerce ...

Un mouvement d'art sérieux ne peut se déterminer sans l'architecture; je ne vois pas d'architecture possible en dehors du peuple, et le peuple tourne le dos aux choses d'art ... Cela n'a pas toujours été, j'ai connu en Angleterre de nombreux vestiges de l'architecture privée et de l'industrie du moyen âge ... Et aussi en France: à Paris, à Reims, à Rouen, avant que vos villes fussent *haussmanisées* ... Je suis venu en France pour la première fois en 1853. Quel trajet j'ai fait alors, de Paris à Rouen, par Mantes, Vernon, etc.! Rien que des merveilles tout le long du chemin! Cela est disparu, tout a été détruit peu à peu depuis cette époque.'

[Having failed to make Morris talk of his principles, Nocq asked him about 'la merveilleuse typographie de Kelmscott-press'.]

‘C’est bien simple, la première qualité d’un livre, c’est d’être facile à lire; les caractères qui fatiguent la vue sont toujours mauvais; il faut être logique, n’est-ce pas? et destiner chaque chose à son usage. J’ai donc fait fabriquer mes caractères, qui se rapprochent des anciens italiens, ou plutôt des types de Mayence, en pensant d’abord au côté pratique, et cela est beau. Je hais surtout les caractères dits elzéviros ou didot, avec leurs déliés bien maigres et bien laids, qui font mal aux yeux. Les plus beaux caractères sont les plus lisibles.’

Walter Crane (from an interview,
in *Tendances nouvelles*, pp. 189-91)

‘Il est certain qu’il y a eu en Angleterre, depuis vingt-cinq ans, un renouveau de la décoration; malgré l’éclecticisme et les tendances diverses des artistes originaux, l’évolution se voit nettement. Nous pouvons en retrouver les sources, en distinguer des éléments; mais la restauration et l’appropriation bien nouvelles sont distinctement anglaises.

Je daterai ce renouveau du commencement de l’école préraphaélite et je l’attribuerai à l’attention au détail et à la recherche de l’effet décoratif qu’elle a préconisées. Je citerai des hommes comme Rossetti et William Morris comme ayant une puissante influence sur ce renouveau. Je pense que nous pouvons aussi proclamer l’utilité pour le public et pour l’industrie des expositions d’art industriel; je n’ai pas vu jusqu’à présent l’exposition du Champ-de-Mars, mais je suis sûr que chez vous, comme ici, de telles expositions auront toujours leur effet sur le goût...

Le système moderne de l’industrie est peu favorable à une production artistique (quoique, pourtant, bien dirigé, il puisse encore produire des choses intéressantes ...). C’est un système organisé uniquement en vue du profit, et qui fait passer la quantité avant la qualité.

L’artiste isolé ou les ouvriers d’art associés dans un travail, en tant qu’artistes, cherchent d’abord la beauté dans leur ouvrage. Ils peuvent désirer vivre de leur travail, mais cela est essentiellement différent des fabricants, qui organisent le travail des autres pour leur profit personnel, et ne s’inquiètent que de la vente. S’il peut y avoir des industriels individuellement doués de sentiment artiste, et aussi des artistes ayant individuellement un côté commercial, le plus généralement ils sont tout à fait différents en principe, et il est difficile de supposer comment ils pourront jamais s’accorder. Le changement dans le système de production manufacturière est cependant nécessaire. Je l’espère, étant artiste, au point de vue artistique, et, étant socialiste, comme devant favoriser le progrès local et varié des petites collectivités. Donc je ne suis pas satisfait de la production industrielle en Angleterre et à l’étranger.

Pourtant je pense qu'en Angleterre, grâce aux efforts de nos artistes, nous avons fait depuis quelque temps de grands progrès. Nous sommes revenus à des lignes meilleures et de réelle valeur, – je parle de nos meilleurs ouvrages.- Sur le continent autant que j'ai pu observer, vos ouvriers d'art sont en général plus experts, mais ils ne semblent pas avoir beaucoup de sentiment; ils ont surtout une certaine compréhension des styles historiques. Malgré tant de peines prises pour cultiver le goût, les formes de la fin de la Renaissance dominent encore très grandement dans l'art de décoration en France, en Allemagne et en Italie ... Nos plus distingués artistes pensent qu'il est mauvais, dans l'étude de l'histoire de la décoration, de regarder les objets postérieurs au premier quart du xvi^e siècle.'

APPENDIX B

Artists and writers featured in *Tendances nouvelles*

Artists and artisans working in various media, with the pages of their responses in *Tendances nouvelles*: Georges Auriol (1863-1938): pp. 63-66; Jean Baffier (1851-1920): pp. 52-54; Félix Bracquemond (1833-1914): pp. 20-25; Félix de Breux [pseud.]: pp. 96-97, 100-3; François-Rupert Carabin (1862-1932): pp. 42-45; Alexandre Charpentier (1856-1909): pp. 16-19; Walter Crane (1845-1915): pp. 189-91; Henry Cros (1840-1907): p. 41; Jean Dampit (1854-1945): pp. 34-36; Ernest Duez (1843-1896): pp. 37-39; Lucien Falize (1839-1897): pp. 81-83; Paul Gauguin (1848-1903): pp. 67-69; Eugène Grasset (1841-1917): pp. 11-15, 97-100; Paul Hankar (1859-1901) and Adolphe Crespín (1859-1944), joint contributors: pp. 77-80; Frantz Jourdain (1847-1935): pp. 72-76; Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac (1855-1921): pp. 70-71; William Morris (1834-1896): pp. 186-89; Jean-François Raffaëlli (1850-1924): pp. 47-51; Félix Régamey (1844-1907): pp. 55-56; Henri Rivière (1864-1951): pp. 60-62; Oscar Roty (1846-1911): pp. 26-28; Gustave Serrurier-Bovy (1858-1910): pp. 29-33; Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901): p. 46; Philippe Zilcken (1851-1930): pp. 57-59.

Critics and writers: Arsène Alexandre (1859-1937): pp. 128-29; Charles Buls (1837-1914): pp. 90-94, 104-7; Victor Champier (1851-1929): pp. 117-20; Gustave Geffroy (1855-1926): pp. 1-4; Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896): pp. 108-11; Henry Havard (1838-1921): pp. 121-27; Paul Lagarde (article from *La Cocarde* reprinted in *Tendances nouvelles*): pp. 168-73; Roger Marx (1859-1913): pp. 130-32; Octave Uzanne (1851-1931): pp. 112-16.

Merchants: Honoré: pp. 87-89; Niederkorn: pp. 83-84.

APPENDIX C

Differences between texts
in *Le Journal des artistes* and *Tendances nouvelles*

Nocq did not reprint in his book the introduction to his *Enquête* published in *Le Journal des artistes* on 2 September 1894. There he made a strong attack on the market for selling 'archaeological' copies, often in the wrong medium, from 'their musty stock'.⁸⁴ He reprinted most of the texts from his review without changes, but he altered a few of his own comments. For Charpentier, he added a final paragraph not found in the *Journal*, a warm accolade mentioning that 'with his interesting trials of waffled paper, impressed leathers and relief lithographs, he decidedly oriented his production toward popular art, from which he awaits the coming renaissance'.⁸⁵ Curiously, in the book he omitted a minute description of Niederkorn's furniture that he had earlier published in the *Journal*, in which pine is cut to expose its grain, which is then coloured. Unlike the 'English lacquers', his surfaces retain 'their strange, exotic look of wood which defies all explanation'.⁸⁶

Responses printed in *Le Journal des artistes* but not included in *Tendances nouvelles*: Duhem de Douai (Henri Aimé Duhem; 1860-1941), 4 November 1894; Pierre-Adrien Dalpayrat (1844-1910), 16 December 1894; Lucien Libron, 4 November 1894; Clément Massier (1845-1917), 28 October 1894; Maxime Maufra (1861-1918), 4 November 1894; Fernand Thesmar (1845-1912), 23 December 1894. These responses are largely similar to those reprinted in *Tendances nouvelles*, but they include a strong attack on Haussmann's architecture by Massier, a merchant who deplored the 'frightful pillars' fronting his shop and described the architecture along Haussmann's streets as 'these ranks of soldiers aligned, all in uniform'.⁸⁷

Responses that Nocq mentioned in *Le Journal des artistes* without supplying the texts there or in *Tendances nouvelles*: Bourge[t?], Edmond Lachenal (1855-1930), Paul Ranson (1861-1909), F. P. de Tavera (Felix Pardo Tavera, 1859-?), and René Wiener (1855-1939).

NOTES

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1. Nocq borrowed his title and some of its form from Jules Huret, *Enquête sur l'évolution littéraire: Conversations avec MM. Renan, de Goncourt, Zola, ...*, Paris 1891.
2. Rosella Froissart-Pezone, *L'Art dans tout: Les arts décoratifs en France et l'utopie d'un art nouveau*, Paris 2004.
3. Froissart-Pezone omitted *Le Journal des artistes* and believed that *Tendances nouvelles* was based on some of Nocq's responses reprinted in the Brussels journal *L'Art moderne* (see below, n. 16).
4. Nocq (1868-1942) exhibited medallions, small sculptures and jewellery regularly in Paris from 1887 onward, but only his medallions are readily found today. The most extensive account of these was published by Leonard Forrer, *Biographical dictionary of medallists*, 8 vols., London, 1902-30, vol. 4 (1909), pp. 277-81. A number of small bronze medallions are in the Cabinet des Médailles, Bibliothèque nationale de France, and the Musée Carnavalet, and a large medallion of Yvette Guilbert, in polychrome sandstone (with carved oak frame, 54.4 cm diameter), is on view in the Musée d'Orsay (ill. 3). For writings by Nocq, see the bibliography in Froissart-Pezone, *L'Art dans tout*. His best known books are *Les médailles d'Antonio Pisano, dit le Pisanello*, Paris 1917, and *Le poinçon de Paris: Répertoire des maîtres-orfèvres de la juridiction de Paris depuis le moyen âge jusqu'à la fin du dix-huitième siècle*, 5 vols., Paris 1926-31.
5. 'Je me suis efforcé, dans la publication des dépositions orales, de respecter scrupu-

leusement au moins le sens des conversations, si la forme et les mots exacts m'échappent quelquefois. [...] J'interviens le plus rarement possible, et toujours dans la forme interrogative. Pourtant, si quelques personnes m'ont paru préjuger de mes opinions personnelles, j'aurais mauvaise grâce à m'en plaindre; – j'en conclus qu'elles ont suivi mes précédentes études avec une bienveillante attention.'

(Nocq's introduction, p. 10). Hereafter I will give pages for Nocq's own texts in parentheses: 'Introduction', pp. 7-10, and his essay, 'Notes sur le Progrès des Industries d'Art', pp. 133-96. Because pages for each respondent in *Tendances nouvelles* are listed in Appendix B, I will not give them in the texts that follow here.

6. 'Au fond d'un grand jardin presque inculte, l'atelier en torchis et la maison, une bonne maison de campagnards avec de clairs rideaux aux fenêtres [...]. Le long du mur, d'un arbre à l'autre, sèche le linge mouillé sur des cordes tendues; des draps blancs, de petites robes rouges.'

7. 'un "inspecteur", cravaté de blanc. Le nom seul de M. Honoré faisait, empressé et obligeant à l'excès, l'homme grave dont la cravate symbolise l'autorité du maître que j'allais visiter. Et je reprenais ma route, bien lentement, bousculé, écrasé, luttant contre le tourbillon affolé des femmes à l'élégance douteuse, à l'odeur banale ou suspecte. Enfin, j'arrivai devant une porte vitrée, gardée par un chasseur majestueux dans sa livrée bleue à boutons d'or. De l'antichambre, où les solliciteurs nombreux sont assis sur des banquettes, je suis introduit d'abord dans le salon du secrétaire particulier – j'allais dire le chef de cabinet – à qui j'explique le but de ma démarche. Puis le secrétaire me laisse seul trois ou quatre minutes et revient me faire savoir que M. Honoré m'attend... et les chambellans étonnés se demandent quel est ce personnage que leur maître reçoit ainsi en audience privée?'

8. 'les tendances artistiques différentes'; 'suivant la compétence relative et la notoriété des témoins'; 'en précisant trop leur attitude, ceux qui préfèrent la prudence des situations vagues'.

9. Referring to the artists' responses, Geffroy wrote 'Il faut les accepter dans leur diversité, avec leurs contradictions évidentes parfois exprimées au cours du même témoignage, avec leur réconfort, et même avec leur méconnaissance du présent et de l'avenir.'

10. This evolution and the many issues

involving the decorative arts have been brilliantly analyzed by Froissart-Pezzone, *l'Art dans tout*, Debora L. Silverman, *Art nouveau in fin-de-siècle France: Politics, psychology and style*, Berkeley 1989, and Leora Auslander, *Taste and power: Furnishing modern France*, Berkeley 1996.

11. Silverman, *Art nouveau, passim*, and Nancy Troy, *Modernism and the decorative arts in France*, New Haven & London 1991, chapter 1. For a contemporary account, see Edmond Plauchaut, 'La Rivalité des industries d'art en Europe', *Revue des deux mondes* 105 (1 June 1891), pp. 628-44. Plauchaut assumed that the decline of French crafts was widely known and feared that France would be outrivalled by other countries.

12. Silverman, *Art nouveau*, pp. 278-81.

13. *La Revue des arts décoratifs* 15 (1895), issues of March, June and September, and 16 (1896), issues of March, May and November. From these we learn that Nocq made at least two visits to England, in August 1895 and November 1896, and several to Brussels.

14. 'Je crois qu'il n'y a qu'à regarder William Morris, pour avoir une réponse à toutes vos questions [...].'

15. 'Voilà que les acheteurs se précipitent en foule chez Maple et chez Liberty. Ils ont raison, puisqu'ils trouvent là des meubles et des étoffes qu'ils ne voient encore nulle part ailleurs [...].'

16. *L'Art moderne*, issues of 14, 21 and 28 October, 9 and 18 November, 2 December 1894 and 27 January 1895. According to Nocq (p. 96), *Le Journal de Bruxelles* also reprinted some responses to his questions, but I have not consulted this review.

17. Baffier, Carabin, Charpentier, Cros, Dalpayrat, Gauguin, Grasset, Montesquiou-Fezensac, Rivière, Thesmar and Toulouse-Lautrec. Niederkorn, the merchant, is also listed among the artists but may have taken credit for a work he commissioned. La Libre Esthétique was the successor of Les XX, a vanguard exhibition society founded in Brussels in 1884 that had often invited neo-impressionists and other French artists.

18. 'Pensez-vous que la tendance constatée chez certains artistes, notamment au Salon du Champ-de-Mars, à appliquer leur talent de peintres et de sculpteurs à l'embellissement d'objets usuels, soit un symptôme d'une renaissance de nos industries d'art? / Y a-t-il un style nouveau (En France ou dans les autres

pays)? / Si le style nouveau existe, quels sont ses éléments caractéristiques? / S'il n'existe pas, dans quelles conditions croyez-vous qu'il puisse se manifester? / Y a-t-il lieu pour le producteur de chercher seulement à satisfaire le goût public, ou, au contraire, à l'influencer et le diriger?'

19. 'cyniquement, a fait machine en arrière en remplaçant, pour l'Exposition de 1900, les objets d'art parmi les classes industrielles.'

20. 'il y aurait un style que nous n'en saurions rien, nous-mêmes, mêlés au mouvement que nous voudrions juger et expliquer.'

21. 'notre déplorable manie d'empailler des cadavres et de gratter la cendre des tombeaux'.

22. 'des pastiches mesquins et prétentieux des architectures passées'.

23. 'Les personnes riches n'achètent pas un buffet sans consulter leur architecte. L'architecte incapable de rien inventer a construit une maison bizarre où une pièce Louis XV succède à une pièce Moyen Age [...]. On n'est plus chez soi, on est dans un musée, ou plutôt dans un magasin de bric à brac.'

24. See Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, *Consuming the past: The medieval revival in fin-de-siècle France*, Aldershot 2003, *passim*.

25. In 1925, Léger wrote that 'the Italian Renaissance meant total decadence.' See Robert L. Herbert, *From Millet to Léger*, New Haven & London 2002, p. 95. Léger proclaimed that Gothic architecture was a product not of individual heroes, as in the Renaissance, but of anonymous artisans who were allowed to interpret nature unfettered by master plans. This is one of many indications that the medievalizing ideals of Morris, Grasset and their like-minded contemporaries contributed to the 'primitivism' of early modern art.

26. 'le livre d'art ornemental qu'il faut consulter'.

27. Nocq thought well of Buls. In 'L'esthétique des villes, un exemple donné par la Belgique', *La Revue des arts décoratifs* 15 (March 1895), pp. 280-81, he praised Buls for helping to embellish the streets of Brussels, putting the Belgians ahead of Paris, where sclerotic rules forbade 'every infraction of absolute alignment and heartless symmetry' ('toute infraction à l'absolu alignement et à l'écoeurante symétrie').

28. 'c'est sur leur stylisation, leur interprétation et leur emploi décoratif que doit s'exercer l'imagination et s'appliquer l'invention de nos artistes industriels.'

29. 'les aspirations de leur siècle, marcher avec lui vers le même idéal de science et de démocratie.'

30. 'C'est à l'indépendance, à l'absence d'inspiration archéologique que je veux que l'on revienne, ainsi que cela existait encore au xve siècle.' 'Non, il ne faut revenir à aucune formule et c'est pour cela qu'il ne faut absolument rien enseigner en fait de styles "anciens". Les musées d'art décoratif ne seront que boutiques inutiles en dehors du but scientifique.'

31. 'L'honneur de l'art français est en jeu ... et aussi le souci de prouver notre bon sens ... Les lampes électriques doivent renoncer à prendre la forme des quinquets, à se dresser sur des rocailles Louis XV ... Louis XVI n'en avait pas ... de lampes électriques.' (Ellipses are in the original text.)

32. 'L'évolution démocratique qui nous emporte nous reconduira vers ces sources vivifiantes, car l'art gothique, fait pour la foule, était démocratique lui-même.'

33. 'devraient s'assurer la collaboration d'ouvriers, de simples ouvriers sans prétentions, mais rompus aux exigences particulières de chaque métier.'

34. 'auront juste ce qu'il faut d'habileté superficielle pour les décorations courantes des meubles "de style" du Faubourg. Cette école ne peut satisfaire que l'avarice des fabricants.'

35. 'je l'aurais obligé, pour se reposer, à travailler comme ouvrier dans toutes les professions voisines de son art.'

36. 'à copier en modelage des morceaux de nature, plantes, animaux, étoffes drapées, figures humaines, mouler ces copies, et leur apprendre la pratique du bois en leur donnant à sculpter leurs propres modèles.'

37. 'à la composition et à la destination de l'œuvre; ne pas faire un bois d'une chose destinée au plâtre, ne pas forger du fer qui ressemble à de la fonte'.

38. 'est une admirable matière; mais combien y a-t-il de gens qui sachent que l'étain n'est beau que mat? Nous voyons des néophytes qui fourbissent l'étain comme des casques et d'autres qui cherchent à l'iriser. Si votre étain ressemble à de la nacre, ou à du ruoltz, ce n'est plus de l'étain.'

39. 'Le public, en général, est idiot,' wrote Rivière. 'Si vous lui montrez un vase en bronze, très camelote, à côté d'un flambé japonais simple mais beau, son choix s'arrêtera sûrement

sur le vase de camelote, parce que, dans son ignorance complète de la beauté, il confond l'élégant et le compliqué [...].'

40. 'Il n'y a pas de plus grand ennemi de l'Art que la mode, et je crois qu'il est de nécessité absolue que l'artiste ne se fasse point le serviteur de cette chose absurde et inintelligente qui est la mode [...]. C'est à lui d'imposer au public une Esthétique plus sincère et plus conforme à la saine raison.'

41. 'non plus seulement aux raffinés, aux collectionneurs, aux dilettanti, mais aux ouvriers, aux naïfs, aux passants qui aimeront ce qu'ils verront partout et souvent.' 'La meilleure école est la rue: c'est dans la rue, aux vitrines des boutiques, les plus modestes comme les plus somptueuses, qu'il deviendrait nécessaire d'exposer de jolis objets usuels, des étoffes, des meubles, des bijoux, des bibelots.' 'elle s'infiltrera infailliblement dans toutes les couches sociales; le terrain est préparé; il faut semer.'

42. 'n'est qu'une résultante, une conséquence, si vous aimez mieux, de l'état d'âme d'un peuple et naturellement il n'est pas possible de séparer l'art de l'ordre social dans lequel il se développe.' 'des principes de décomposition, car c'est par la désagrégation de toute croyance, de tout idéal, que les pouvoirs publics se recrutent [...] car le public, le suffrage universel, si vous aimez mieux, qui est la force, est avec les sophistes, c'est-à-dire avec ceux qui, incapables de créer, se font destructeurs ou pasticheurs. For Baffier, right-wing nationalist and polemical journalist as well as sculptor, see Neil McWilliam, *Monumental intolerance: Jean Baffier, a nationalist sculptor in fin-de-siècle France*, University Park, Pa., 2000.

43. See Eugenia W. Herbert, *The artist and social reform: France and Belgium, 1885-1898*, New Haven 1961; John Hutton, *Neo-impressionism and the search for solid ground: Art, science, and anarchism in fin-de-siècle France*, Baton Rouge 1994; and Martha Ward, *Pissarro, neo-impressionism, and the spaces of the avant-garde*, Chicago 1996.

44. 'Le monde intellectuel et social dans lequel nous vivons est manifestement appelé à une transformation prochaine. Une évolution se prépare qui amènera vraisemblablement des modifications profondes à l'ordre de choses actuel et si les artistes commettaient l'erreur de mettre leur talent au service de la décadence du

moment, ils verraient leurs œuvres fatalement condamnées à sombrer avec le régime qui finit. En en mot ce n'est pas pour une Société qui disparaît qu'il faut travailler [...]. 'simultanément avec un ordre de choses moral et philosophique nouveau.'

45. Silverman, *Art nouveau*, pp. 186-206.

Auslander deals extensively with the continued separation of men, seen as producers, and women, as consumers: Auslander, *Taste and power*, pp. 220-24, 277-96 and *passim*.

46. 'Les éléments d'innovation dans le meuble seraient la couleur, doucement dosée, – et surtout quelque chose de symbolique et de pensif, de par le décor variant et commentant un texte, une idée.'

47. 'Ce qu'on peut affirmer, c'est que le *quaere mulierem*, l'éternel féminin sera la loi du nouveau style, comme il le fut des précédents, et que la Femme moderne, qui a su se créer des ajustements nouveaux, devra, dans l'avenir, être évoquée par l'aspect des meubles nouveaux que d'ingénieux artistes lui auront appropriés [...].'

48. Silverman, *Art nouveau*, pp. 52-62. To Silverman's succinct summary, one should add Auslander, *Taste and power*, whose whole book is focused on the furniture industry.

49. 'je vois une concentration de forces amenée par une simplicité suprême de détails, et cette concentration même, produit de lignes réduites, synthétiques, qui donnent des formes nouvelles, non sans style, et parfois très pures.'

50. 'Notre siècle est le triomphe de l'ingénieur: Cours avec tes machines à vapeur, parle avec tes téléphones, parcours la terre comme un éclair, mais dans le ciel tu ne feras pas un pas [...].'

51. 'de grandes lithographies sobrement et intelligemment teintées'; 'l'œil des enfants en introduisant ces grandes affiches murales dans les écoles, au lieu des misérables tableaux qu'on y voit aujourd'hui.'

52. *Le Journal des artistes*, 4 November 1894, p. 793: 'N'y a-t-il pas lieu d'accepter ce mal inévitable et de chercher à l'atténuer en fournissant à l'industrie des modèles plus artistiques?'

53. Silverman, *Art nouveau*, p. 141. See also Havard's *Dictionnaire de l'ameublement et de la décoration depuis la XIIIe siècle à nos jours*, 4 vols., Paris 1887-90.

54. See Silverman, *Art nouveau*, pp. 175-78, especially for her perceptive study of the political and cultural significance of Roty's new image.

55. 'Tout cela sent l'anglais vicieux, la Juive morphinomane ou le Belge roublard, ou une agréable salade de ces trois poisons.' 'L'Art nouveau', *Le Figaro*, 28 December 1895, reprinted in *La promenade du critique influent*, ed. Paul Bouillon et al., Paris 1990, pp. 391-93 [p. 393]. It should be noted that Alexandre subsequently became a Dreyfusard.

56. 'les étrangers copier la plupart de nos modèles, et comme ces modèles n'avaient guère changé pendant des années, les étrangers s'étaient fait la main aux formes françaises, et la concurrence devenait dangereuse [...].'

57. In 1894 Uzanne had just published a new book, *La femme à Paris: Nos contemporaines*.

Typical of his many books is *L'Ombrelle, le manchon, le gant*, 1884. For Uzanne, see Silverman, *Art nouveau*, pp. 70-72.

58. 'Les Anglo-Saxons ont sur nous une force indiscutable, la *solidarité*; cette force se retrouve dans tout ce qui peut contribuer au relèvement du génie national, tandis que nous nous appliquons à développer l'envie et la haine des talents [...]. Toute entreprise nouvelle, originale, sérieuse, a contre elle, en France, l'omnipotence de la médiocrité jalouse, l'effarement des officiels et la fatalité d'envoûtement qu'exerce un général désir d'insuccès; faire grand est devenu impossible.' Uzanne's use of the term 'solidarité' seems to hint at the doctrine of Republican solidarism launched in 1895 by the prime minister Léon Bourgeois, an attempt to counter the communitarian appeal of socialism. See Silverman, *Art nouveau*, pp. 49-51, 73-74, 133-36. Uzanne's pessimism, however, is a far cry from the optimism implicit in solidarism.

59. 1. Tendances nouvelles.

II. La mode des styles anciens ne subsiste que grâce à l'ignorance du public. La cupidité de quelques industriels y trouve son compte; aussi s'efforcent-ils d'enrayer la marche et le progrès des industries d'art.

III. Influence et manœuvres de ces industriels dans les expositions.

IV. Leur influence dans les écoles professionnelles.

V. Il est regrettable qu'on ait répandu dans le public une connaissance très vague des styles c'est-à-dire des modes d'autrefois.

VI. L'union centrale et son congrès.

VII. Nécessité d'étendre aux inventions décoratives les garanties de la propriété artistique.

- viii. La signature des collaborateurs industriels. Plaisantes revendications de la Fédération des ouvriers d'art.
- ix. Le progrès des industries d'art en Angleterre.
- x. Retour des artistes à l'industrie décorative; alliance étroite de l'art et de l'industrie grâce à la production mécanique.
60. L'évolution des artistes sera plus longue' (p. 138).
61. 'de faire œuvre utile dans le temps présent, pour le temps présent' (p. 140).
62. 'ces objets de faux luxe archéologique et prétentieux' (p. 144)
63. Silverman, *Art nouveau*, pp. 137-40 and p. 358, nn. 7, 8.
64. Silverman, *Art nouveau*, pp. 208-09; Froissart-Pezone, *L'Art dans tout*, pp. 36-40.
65. 'comme sur la colonne de Juillet' (p. 162).
66. 'L'ouvrier véritablement amoureux de la matière transformée dans ses mains, qu'il en fasse un Dieu, une table ou une cuvette, est déjà récompensé par le plaisir qu'il ressent à dompter une matière qu'il aime et qu'il contraint à revêtir la forme imaginée. Qu'importe alors la signature?' (pp. 160-61)
67. 'serve de prétexte à la création de nouveaux syndicats d'ouvriers d'art [...]. Tout nouveau syndicat va creuser davantage le fossé, accentuer les différences entre les artisans et les artistes, classification injuste et surannée que tous nos efforts tendent à faire disparaître.' (p. 167)
68. In *Le Journal des artistes*, 3 March 1895, Nocq printed his discussion of Lagarde, but not Lagarde's essay.
69. 'tout dans leur besogne coutumière est tellement réglé, prévu, qu'il n'y a qu'à tourner la manivelle pour "exprimer la mélodie".' (p. 177)
70. *La Société nouvelle* 10 (July-August 1894), pp. 32-47 [p. 46]: 'l'ardeur sauvage du monde civilisé, engagé à outrance dans sa chasse au Capital et sur les champs de bataille.'
71. In *William Morris et le mouvement nouveau de l'art décorative*, Geneva 1897, Lahor (i.e., Henri Cazalis) wrote that Morris's socialism had generous intentions but was very vague and could be discounted. For Lahor and the French depoliticization of Morris, see Froissart-Pezone, pp. 81-86.
72. 'Ordre, logique, simplicité, c'est de là précisément que vient, selon moi, la prospérité de l'industrie décorative anglaise.' (Reprinted in *Tendances nouvelles*, p. 181)
73. 'Dans la rue, les devantures des magasins revêtues de tons plats, presque toujours clairs, attestent une sobriété et une élégance vraie qui contrastent avec les dorures, le luxe artificiel, prétentieux et archéologique de nos boutiques parisiennes. Ici point de décors, point d'arabesques surannées; le faux marbre et les pâtisseries sont bannies partout.' (p. 182)
74. p. 188.
75. 'le public ne comprend pas encore complètement, mais le petit commerce, dont le concours est important, s'adresse déjà à nous; il vient peu à peu aux manufacturiers de l'art nouveau.' (p. 192)
76. 'Décadence' was a current French buzz-word for the era, sometimes synonymous with symbolism.
77. 'elle est excellent, pourvu qu'on lui demande, non plus les qualités imprévues, pittoresques, hésitantes du travail manuel, mais qu'on invente des formes convenant au travail rigoureux des machines.' (p. 195)
78. Gillian Naylor gives a succinct summary of Cole's views in *The Arts and Crafts movement*, London 1971, pp. 18-20. For a perceptive view of the rapidly changing relation of machinery to furniture making, see Auslander, *Taste and power*.
79. For a good summary of Morris's views of the machine and his relevance to French developments, see Henry Needham, *Le développement de l'esthétique sociologique en France et en Angleterre au XIXe siècle*, Paris 1926, pp. 65-95.
80. 'Grâce à la production mécanique leurs œuvres seront mises à la portée du plus grand nombre et ainsi serviront au progrès social.' (p. 196)
81. 'C'est la fin du prétendu grand art. Peut-être, mais qu'importe?' (p. 196)
82. That is, like a 'flambé' vase. From Goncourt's journal of these years, we learn that he admired the Turners possessed by the collector Groult, and that he thought Turner's flaming colours approached those of 'flambés' vases, hence the parallel with 'art industriel'. For Groult's Turners, see Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal*, ed. Robert Ricatte, 3 vols., Paris 1989, vol. 3, entries for 18 January 1890 and 12 August 1891.
83. 'principes de la saine doctrine'.
84. 'leurs stocks muséedéclunistes'.
85. 'avec ses intéressants essais de papiers

gaufrés, de cuirs frappés, de lithos en relief,
il a nettement orienté sa production vers
l'art populaire dont il attend la prochaine
renaissance.'

86. 'lacqués anglais'; 'leur aspect de bois
étrange, exotique, qui défie toute explication.'

87. 'affreux piliers'; 'ces files de soldats alignés,
tous uniformés'.



1. Fernand Cormon, undated photograph by Henri Manuel, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris

Van Gogh

in Cormon's studio:

A chronological puzzle

Louis van Tilborgh

Among the many current approaches to art history, fact-finding is often regarded as secondary; yet, no theoretical hypothesis can be maintained if it is based on faulty information. Furthermore, facts sometimes have to be established through the evaluation of many details, and such is the case with the date of Van Gogh's stay at the studio of Fernand Piestre, called Cormon (ill. 1). At the end of February 1886 Van Gogh left Antwerp and made for Paris, intending to enroll at Cormon's studio.¹ He did indeed put this plan into effect, but opinions are divided as to precisely when this was. Several authors believed that he went to Cormon's as soon as he arrived in Paris, in other words in the spring.² Others thought it was in the autumn, and even the period from October 1886 to January 1887 has been mooted.³ Some, though, have felt that there are insufficient grounds for accepting any of these suggestions.⁴

These efforts to pinpoint exactly when Van Gogh was with Cormon within a time-frame of less than a year may seem trivial, but the precise timing does matter if we are to have a better understanding of his artistic development during his Paris years. In a very short space of time, after all, he mastered the style of the French avant garde of the day, and within this process the production of works with an academic bias has a different significance in the spring of 1886 from

what it would have in the autumn of that year, let alone in the following winter, when he had already started to make his first works in the footsteps of the neo-impressionists and Toulouse-Lautrec. In the last case, we could almost be looking at a sort of schizophrenia in Van Gogh's artistic thinking, but fortunately we do not have to agonize over the question as to whether this might be possible. A detailed study of all the sources that contain a reference to his time in Cormon's studio leads inescapably to the conclusion that he embarked on this course of study as soon as he got to Paris.

At least three paintings and thirty-three drawings can be dated to Van Gogh's time with Cormon,⁵ but were these paintings to have been done in autumn 1886 or in 1887, it would imply that Van Gogh produced hardly any work during the first few months that he spent in Paris. This is simply not credible, but it is necessary to make a critical examination of the evidence not only to see how some scholars could have reached this conclusion, but also to distinguish between history and myth.

Recollections of contemporaries

What do we know about Van Gogh's time with Cormon? From a letter to his English colleague Horace Mann Livens, what we can be sure of is that Van Gogh studied there for 'three or four months' [572/459a]. Looking back, contemporaries believed that they could remember exactly when this was, but they gave conflicting accounts.⁶

In her brief biography of Vincent, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, his brother Theo's widow, said that Vincent had studied at the Paris studio in the spring of 1886. After moving in with Theo in March, he had 'worked at Cormon's during the day for the first few months', as she wrote in her introduction to the letters from Van Gogh to his brother published in 1914. 'After a while this did not suit him at all, and once they moved to 54 rue Lepic in Montmartre in June he had his own studio and was done with Cormon for good.'⁷ This information must have been based on what she remembered of Theo's accounts of when the two brothers lived together, so mistakes cannot be ruled out. One thing, though, is certain: the move took place around the beginning of June.⁸

Jo's assertion as to the dating of Van Gogh's time with Cormon tallied with the recollections of the English artist Archibald Standish Hartrick, who first met Van Gogh at the end of 1886.⁹ In *A painter's pilgrimage through fifty years*, he wrote that the Dutch painter 'had been working *chez* Cormon, up to the summer of 1886'.¹⁰ Given the publication date – 1939 – this could have been taken from Jo's introduction to the letters, but Hartrick had already said the same thing in 1913, albeit indirectly. According to the article he published at that time, he got to know

Van Gogh 'about six months after he had left the Atelier Cormon', and this implies that his friend must have left Cormon's in about June 1886.¹¹

The unanimity of these two independent sources would seem conclusive were it not for an opposing voice. Contrary to what Jo and Hartrick had written, Emile Bernard suggested several times that his friend had worked at Cormon's in the *autumn* of 1886. His evidence appears to be important because, unlike the other two, he was directly involved. He commenced his studies at Cormon's studio in 1884, but left in early April 1886, in other words about a month after Van Gogh arrived in Paris (ill. 2).¹² He then went to Brittany, where he stayed until some time in the autumn – probably around October – and it was on his return to Paris that he claimed to have seen Van Gogh at work as a pupil.¹³ 'Back in Paris, I go to pay a visit to Cormon's studio. There, an artist, painting furiously [...] It's Vincent van Gogh,' he noted in 1903.¹⁴ In a manuscript published posthumously, this memory was described in greater detail: 'On my return to Paris after my first trip to Brittany, I went back to visit my studio comrades at Cormon's, among others Tampier and Toulouse-Lautrec. That was the first time I saw Vincent van Gogh, who was painting.'¹⁵



2. Cormon's studio with Fernand Cormon seated at the easel (Emile Bernard is seen at the far right of the top row), c. 1884-86, Musée Toulouse-Lautrec, Albi

Later interpretations

So how did later authors decide between these two conflicting views? In 1956 John Rewald nominated Jo van Gogh-Bonger as the principal witness, but twenty years later Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov cautiously rejected this and suggested that Bernard, as someone who had actually been there, had a greater right to be heard.¹⁶ In 2001 this struck a chord with Sijraar van Heugten, who even thought that Bernard's observation quoted above was 'so specific that a considerable degree of weight can be attached to it'.¹⁷ Jan Hulsker had meanwhile come down in favour of Jo's account. It was identical to Hartrick's, and, moreover, he did not believe that Van Gogh would have put off going to Cormon's for six months 'after the great pressure he had put on Theo to let him come to Paris as soon as possible for this purpose'.¹⁸

The two conflicting views were defended with reasonable arguments, but without the authors actually proving anything. The studio, according to Hartrick, was 'small and select, not more than thirty to thirty-five pupils all told, of whom few were foreigners', and might not have had a place available for a new student immediately, while memories can be very specific and yet totally unreliable.¹⁹ There is only one fact against which the assertions of contemporaries can be tested, and that is Van Gogh's own statement, quoted earlier, that he had stayed for 'three or four months' [572/459a].

This time span accords with Jo's and Hartrick's versions of the story. Both wrote that the artist had studied at the studio until the summer. Counting from his arrival in Paris – around 28 February – this would mean that his period of study did indeed last between three and four months.²⁰ Bernard, however, had a different estimate. He wrote that Vincent stayed with Cormon for *two* months.²¹ Although, strictly speaking, this inaccurate statement tells us nothing about the truth or otherwise of his later recollections of his meeting Van Gogh in the autumn of 1886, his mistake does have implications when we assess his credibility. Just because he was a direct observer, we do not by definition have to rate him higher than Jo and Hartrick.

Additional sources

There are several sources other than those mentioned above, and they contain indications that it is Jo and Hartrick, not Bernard, who are in the right. One of them is concealed in the correspondence of Andries Bonger, Jo's older brother. At the beginning of April 1886 this friend of Theo's told his parents about Vincent's recent arrival in Paris. 'Theo's brother,' he wrote, 'is here for good, he's staying for at least three years to work in the painter Cormon's studio.'²²

The last phrase has always been read as if this was a future plan, but it is debatable whether Andries actually meant it that way.²³ He did *not* write 'to go and work' and the statement could therefore equally relate to the present. This latter actually seems all the more likely, given what Andries says at the beginning of the sentence. Van Gogh's future was, after all, already decided (he was staying 'for good'), and from this we can infer that there was no longer any doubt about his admission to the studio. The length of his period of study – at least three years – was already fixed, and this also tends to confirm that he already had a place. When he wrote to Theo from Antwerp, Vincent had been thinking in terms of staying at Cormon's for just *one* year, and this drastic extension and change to the original plan would seem to reflect consultation and an arrangement with the studio itself.²⁴ What is more, Bonger had already described him in a letter of 17 March as someone 'who's working to become a painter', and it would be difficult to interpret this as meaning anything other than that he was already studying at this time.²⁵

A second, similar indication can be found in the undated letter to Livens in which Van Gogh mentioned the length of time he spent with Cormon. In this context it is important to establish the date of this letter. It was originally placed in the autumn of 1886, but in recent decades some authors started to believe that it was written in the autumn of 1887.²⁶ It contains several points of similarity to Van Gogh's letter of the end of October of that year to his sister Willemien, among them his expressed desire to go to the South of France.²⁷

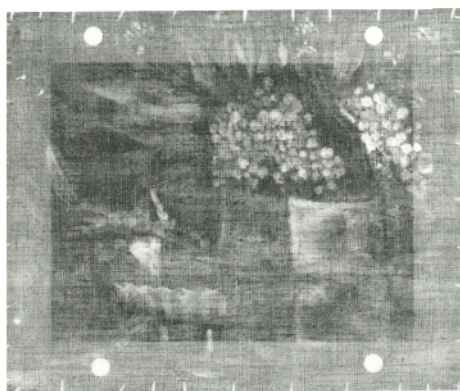
However, the subject of this proposed trip was not confined exclusively to the second half of 1887. Van Gogh had already started to give serious consideration to the idea of leaving Paris in the winter of 1886-87.²⁸ A number of elements in the letter to Livens also point to a date in the autumn of 1886 rather than in the second half of 1887.²⁹ To start with, the letter was Van Gogh's first communication with his friend, who had stayed behind in Antwerp. He began by saying that he had thought about him 'very often' in Paris, even amending this to 'almost daily' later in the letter [572/459a]. These opening words and the personal attachment they imply would have read very oddly if he had been writing to Livens after eighteen months rather than just six.³⁰

In his letter Van Gogh gave an account of his oeuvre at that time, and this was too scant to be an accurate reflection of his position as an artist in the summer of 1887. He wrote, for instance, about 'a dozen landscapes, frankly *green*, frankly *blue*' [572/459a], and this figure is too low for the works he made in Asnières in the spring and summer of 1887 – some thirty or forty all told – whereas it is broadly in line with what he had painted in 1886.³¹ At the time of writing, moreover, he did not consider himself as belonging to the impressionists – '*not* being one of the club' [572/459a]. He would never have said this in the second half of 1887, when he was doing his utmost to connect with modern French art.³²

This revised dating of the letter to Livens to the autumn of 1886 – probably September-October – is important in the context of the discussion, because we can *indirectly* infer from the passage about his artistic activities since leaving Antwerp something about the timing of his stay at Cormon's. His description of his work corresponds with what we know about his output at that time. Aside from those 'dozen landscapes', he had made 'a series of colour studies in painting simply flowers' and 'two heads which I dare say are better in light and colour than those I did before' [572/459a].³³ He referred to his time at the studio only in passing – in a postscript – as if he had forgotten to mention it. From this and perhaps also from his rather vague account of how long he spent there – three or four months – we can conclude that he had ended this period of study some time before.³⁴ This points to spring or summer, but thanks to his next words we can be a little more precise. Since he left the studio, he told Livens in rather awkward English, he had 'worked alone, and fancy that since I feel my own self more' [572/459a]. As he had implicitly described the flower still lifes and landscapes of the summer as the result of this endeavour to produce better, more personal work, this suggests that his time at Cormon's had preceded this – in other words had been in the spring of 1886.



3. Vincent van Gogh, *Nude girl, seated*, 1886, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; F 215 JH 1045



4. X-radiograph of *Nude girl, seated*. The canvas is rotated 90° clockwise to show the underlying still life



5. Vincent van Gogh, *Vase with peonies and roses*, 1886, Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; F 249 JH 1105

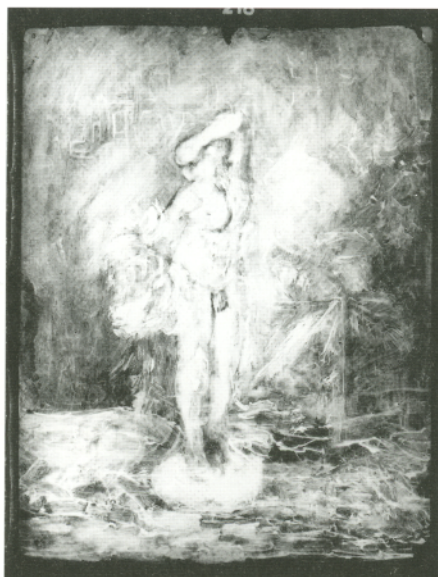
Van Gogh's oeuvre as a source

Interestingly, arguments can also be derived from some of Van Gogh's paintings. Van Gogh reused many canvases in 1886, and the combined evidence derived from two of these works and their underlying images as revealed by X-radiographs leads to clear conclusions, if interpreted correctly. One work is *Nude girl, seated* (ill. 3), a figure study done during the classes with Cormon, which is painted over a picture of flowers (ill. 4). It has been assumed that this was one of the numerous flower still lifes he did in the summer of 1886,³⁵ and, in the light of this dating, it was suggested that Van Gogh did not go to Cormon until the late summer or the autumn.

This conflicts with the documentary pointers we have discussed above, but the real question is whether the primary assumption was in fact correct. In other words, was the painting underneath really one of the still lifes he did in the summer? On the X-radiograph we can see a tall vase of flowers on the right and a sort of ridged shape, probably a basket or a plate, on the left. The painting differs in this respect from Van Gogh's flower still lifes of the summer of 1886, all of which



6. Vincent van Gogh, *Glass with yellow roses*, 1886, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; F 218 JH 1144



7. X-radiograph of *Glass with yellow roses*

8. Vincent van Gogh, *Young slave*, 1886, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; F 1363cv JH 1079

are symmetrical and show only a vase of flowers (ill. 5). The dating of the painting under *Nude girl, seated* to the summer of 1886 is therefore questionable, rendering the work of no value as evidence in the present debate.³⁶

More important is the second overpainted work, *Glass with yellow roses* (ill. 6), which has so far been overlooked. This small study dates from late June-mid July 1886, one of his first flower still lifes in a long series in the genre.³⁷ What makes this painting interesting is what is underneath it: a painting of a plaster cast of Michelangelo's *Young slave* against a blue background (ill. 7). This background colour, the brushwork – visible on the X-radiograph –, the iconography and the composition all indicate that this was one of Van Gogh's earliest works in oils after plaster replicas of antique statues, of which seven were known to date (ill. 9).³⁸ These paintings were preceded by at least eleven exploratory drawings (ill. 8, 10), and in light of the date when *Glass with yellow roses* was made, this associated group must have been created before late June-mid July 1886.³⁹

This has implications for the debate, because these works were produced *after* Van Gogh's time at Cormon's. The accepted assumption is that they were done





9. Vincent van Gogh, *Plaster statuette of a female torso*, 1886, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; F 216b JH 1060



10. Vincent van Gogh, *Torso of Venus*, 1886, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam; SD 1709r JH 1066



11. Vincent van Gogh, *Torso of Venus*,
1886, Van Gogh Museum,
Amsterdam; SD 1713r JH 1061

in the studio in Theo's apartment, and that Vincent used statuettes from his own collection of plaster casts.⁴⁰ The belief that the whole group was not made before or during his period of study is based chiefly on the drawings (ill. 8, 10). Their style is rather freer and looser than that of the – larger – sheets after the plaster statuettes he had done at Cormon's studio (ill. 11). Their pictorial language does, though, derive from the drawings he made there, and this all implies that they were done *later*.⁴¹

Another argument in support of this dating can be derived from the paintings in the same group. In these works, Van Gogh practised modelling (ill. 9), a technique in which the effect of volume is achieved not by adding light and shade, but through the touch, the brushstroke. This conflicted with what was taught at the art academies and at Cormon's studio, and Vincent must therefore have seen these unusual paintings as an essential correction to this academic style.⁴² This, too, points to a date for the studies of the plaster casts *after* his time with Cormon, and in conjunction with the knowledge (arising out of the overpainting referred to above) that they must have been done before late June-mid July 1886, it is a new confirmation of the thesis that Van Gogh attended Cormon's studio in the spring of 1886.

Conclusion

Taken in conjunction with the documentary indications, this gives us sufficient certainty to endorse Jo's and Hartrick's accounts unreservedly. Van Gogh worked at Cormon's from early March, soon after his arrival in Paris, until probably the first or second week of June 1886, when the two brothers moved to a larger apartment in rue Lepic. Altogether this is 'three or four months', as he himself had said about his time with Cormon, and this brings us back to one of the main arguments in favour of an early dating of this. There is general agreement about the works that must have been done *after* this period of study. If this period is placed later, it would mean that, aside from some sketches and a few paintings, there would be virtually nothing extant from his oeuvre during the first three months after his arrival.⁴³

As we can see, Van Gogh really did carry out the plan he had hatched in Antwerp to go and study with Cormon *as soon as* he got to Paris.⁴⁴ Admittedly, while he was in Antwerp he did twice suggest to Theo that before enrolling at the studio he could spend some time drawing 'in the Louvre or the Ecole des Beaux Arts' [566/455], but he made this suggestion simply and solely to show Theo that *if* he was allowed to come sooner than the date proposed by his brother – that is to say July – he could spend the intervening period usefully.⁴⁵ Because of the cramped conditions in his old apartment Theo would not hear of an earlier arrival, but at the beginning of March Vincent presented him with a *fait accompli* by turning up unannounced.⁴⁶ He then carried out his original idea of trying to enrol at Cormon's immediately – and evidently succeeded in doing so.⁴⁷

All this having been said, there remains only one unresolved issue. For if Van Gogh really did study at Cormon's in the spring of 1886, why did Bernard persist in saying that he had met his friend at the studio in the autumn? The answer is simple: his memory was playing him false. If his remarks about Van Gogh are put into chronological order, it is evident that at a certain point two meetings that were clearly separated in time were conflated into a single – misleading – recollection.

As we can reconstruct it, Bernard met Van Gogh for the first time at the studio, and that must have been at the beginning of March 1886. 'I met him at the time he entered Cormon's studio, where he stayed for two months,' as he himself wrote – without giving any date – in 1889.⁴⁸ Since he went to Brittany on 6 April 1886 and had had perforce to leave the studio some time before this, it cannot possibly have been anything but a superficial contact.⁴⁹ Bernard's *second* meeting with Van Gogh took place in the autumn, after he got back from Brittany. He wrote about it for the first time in 1890, shortly after Van Gogh's death. Having said again that he had got to know Van Gogh 'for the first time at Cormon's studio', he continued – without indicating that this was at a different time: 'Then at Tanguy's, that little funeral chapel [...] When he emerged from

the back of the shop, that high, wide brow, he was blazing so much I was almost afraid; but we soon became friends.’⁵⁰ Because of the friendship that grew out of it, this later meeting was much more important than the preceding contact and it supplanted that first, impersonal acquaintanceship in Bernard’s memory. At any rate, from this moment on he only ever said in his essays that he had seen Van Gogh for the first time at Tanguy’s.⁵¹ The previous meeting at Cormon’s did not vanish from view, but in time it was subordinated – directly or indirectly – to the second instance or was associated with it. In 1924, for instance, he wrote confidently about ‘my acquaintance with Vincent at old man Tanguy’s, when he was still a student at Cormon’s free studio’, and in so doing, as we have already seen, he put many Van Gogh researchers on the wrong track for a very long time.⁵²

NOTES

This article arose out of the research undertaken for the catalogue of Van Gogh's Antwerp and Paris paintings in the Van Gogh Museum. The dates of a number of paintings have been revised in this catalogue, which will be published in 2008. Where dates of works referred to in this article differ from those traditionally given, this is based on these recent findings. Some of these have already been included in Ella Hendriks and Louis van Tilborgh, *New views on Van Gogh's development in Antwerp and Paris: An integrated art historical and technical study of his paintings in the Van Gogh Museum / Nieuwe visies op Van Goghs ontwikkeling in Antwerpen en Parijs. Een geïntegreerde technische en kunsthistorische studie van zijn schilderijen in het Van Gogh Museum*, 2 vols. (diss., University of Amsterdam, 2006). In this unpublished dissertation, the Cormon article (in Dutch and in a slightly different form) can be found in vol. 1, pp. 37-51.

1. Cormon's studio in the 1882-87 period was studied by Frédéric Destremau, 'L'atelier Cormon (1882-1887)', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français*, 1996, pp. 171-84. Van Gogh's intention of studying with this master is documented in his Antwerp letters 559/448-563/452, and in 565/454-569/458. The plan to stay for one year is set out in letter 565/454. Contrary to what had previously been assumed, this was the first letter to Theo on this subject; it was followed by letter 559/448 (with thanks to Leo Jansen and Hans Luijten for the information).
2. John Rewald, *Post-impressionism: from Van Gogh to Gauguin*, New York 1956, p. 21, believed that Van Gogh enrolled immediately upon his arrival. However, after the publication of Welsh-Ovcharov's book on Van Gogh's Paris period in 1976 – see the following note – he wrote in the third edition of his book (New York 1978, pp. 26, 27), that Van Gogh could also have studied with Cormon after the summer. Jan Hulsker, *Van Gogh door Van Gogh. De brieven als commentaar op zijn werk*, Amsterdam 1973, p. 487 nn. 4, 5, in the wake of Rewald's first opinion, also dated

the stay to the spring (see also his *Lotgenoten. Het leven van Vincent en Theo van Gogh*, Weesp 1985, p. 651 n. 151, and his *The new complete Van Gogh: Paintings, drawings, sketches*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia 1996, pp. 224, 228-30), as, later, did Ronald Pickvance, 'Van Gogh en het pointillisme', in Ellen Wardwell Lee *et al.*, exhib. cat. *Neo-impressionisten: Seurat tot Struycken*, Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 1988, p. 93.

3. In her *Vincent van Gogh: His Paris period 1886-1888*, Utrecht 1976, pp. 55 n. 14, 209-12, Bogomila Welsh-Ovcharov said that Van Gogh's period of study had probably taken place in the autumn of 1886, although she was not prepared to rule out altogether the possibility of a split stay in both spring and late summer (p. 212). In her later exhib. cat. *Van Gogh à Paris*, Paris (Musée d'Orsay) 1988, pp. 16, 17, 26 n. 13, however, she wrote that autumn was the only possibility. Destremau, 'L'atelier Cormon', pp. 177, 183 n. 52, subsequently suggested that the period of study could be located roughly between the autumn of 1886 and the spring of 1887 (see, for the grounds for his assertion, note 6 of the present article). Sjraar van Heugten and Marije Vellekoop, finally, proposed the period from October 1886 to January 1887 (Sjraar van Heugten, 'Van Gogh in Antwerpen en Parijs: Moderne kunst voor moderne tijden', in Marije Vellekoop and Sjraar van Heugten, *Vincent van Gogh: Tekeningen. Antwerpen & Parijs 1885-1888*, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam 2001, pp. 18, 21, 22; cf. cat. 238-271, pp. 112-76).

4. Roland Dorn, 'Emile Bernard and Vincent van Gogh', in Mary Anne Stevens *et al.*, exhib. cat. *Emile Bernard 1868-1941: A pioneer of modern art / Ein Wegbereiter der Moderne*, Mannheim (Kunsthalle) & Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 1990, pp. 32, 46 n. 8; cf. pp. 19, 27 n. 63, 110.

5. For these drawings from life and from plaster replicas of antique statues, see Vellekoop and Van Heugten, *Vincent van Gogh*, cat. 238-271. The three paintings are *Nude girl, seated* (ill. 3) and two other works from the nude, over which he later painted self-portraits (F 180 JH 1194 and F 208a JH 1089).

6. The memoirs of the critic Gustave Coquiot and those of two of Van Gogh's fellow students at Cormon's – Louis Anquetin and François Gauzi – have not been taken into account in the body of the article. These writings play virtually no part in the debate, but for the sake of completeness I shall treat them here briefly.

François Gauzi, *Lautrec et son temps*, Paris 1954, p. 28 n. 1, thought that Van Gogh had started at Cormon's in June 1886. This information was cited by Hulsker, *The new complete Van Gogh*, p. 230, as an authentic recollection, but these are not Gauzi's words; it was a footnote added by the editor of the manuscript, François Daulte. Later in the book (p. 30 n. 1) Daulte stated that a painting by Van Gogh referred to by Gauzi – an exercise from the nude model in Cormon's studio – must be F 328 JH 1212. Since this work dates from the first half of 1887, it could be inferred from this that Van Gogh's stay with the Paris master had continued until that time, but this is an incorrect conclusion. The identification is speculative: in Gauzi's account the subject is a woman on blue drapery, and in F 328 JH 1212 the sheets are white.

Destremau, 'L'atelier Cormon', pp. 177, 183 n. 52, pointed to Anquetin's short note about Van Gogh, written long after the event, in which he suggests that Vincent painted a still life with shoes and a blue drape at Cormon's studio (Louis Anquetin, *De l'art*, ed. Camille Versini, Paris 1970, pp. 427, 428). Destremau identified this painting as F 333 JH 1236, and in light of the date this still life was painted – early 1887 – he concluded that Vincent had studied with Cormon in the spring of that year. But no other source – as is indicated in the body of the present article – points to this, so the suggestion lacks credibility. Anquetin's account is moreover quite anecdotal, and it is not clear from the context whether it was based on his own observation. It may have been an imperfect recollection of a story he had heard from Gauzi, who remembered Van Gogh both painting a still life with shoes and working from life at Cormon's studio but, unlike Anquetin, did *not* link the two (see Gauzi, *Lautrec*, pp. 30, 31).

Gustave Coquiott, who first met Van Gogh in the winter of 1886-87, wrote in his *Vincent van Gogh*, Paris 1923, pp. 116, 129, that the artist had studied at Cormon's for no more than three months. He supposedly left the studio at the same time as Toulouse-Lautrec, but this was disputed by A.S. Hartrick, *A painter's pilgrimage through fifty years*, Cambridge 1939, p. 48.

7. '[...] de eerste maanden overdag bij Cormon gewerkt. Dit beviel hem op den duur volstrekt niet, en toen zij in juni verhuisden naar de rue Lepic 54 op Montmartre kreeg hij een eigen

atelier en had voor goed afgedaan met Cormon.' J. van Gogh-Bonger, 'Inleiding', in *Vincent van Gogh. Brieven aan zijn broeder*, ed. J. van Gogh-Bonger, 3 vols., Amsterdam 1914, vol. 1, p. XLVII. Before this the two brothers lived at 25 rue Laval.

8. This is clear from F 231 JH 1099: in it we see the view from Vincent's studio at the back of the apartment in rue Lepic. In the foreground there is an elder in bloom, and since this tree flowers roughly between mid-May and mid-June, it means that the painting must have been made during this period in 1886.

9. Hartrick, who returned from a trip to Brittany in November, met him shortly afterwards at the home of the Australian artist John Peter Russell. Hartrick, *A painter's pilgrimage*, pp. 39, 42; see also p. 51.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

11. A.S. Hartrick, 'Post-Impressionism', *The Imprint* 1 (1913), May, p. 307; see, for this publication, Martin Bailey, 'Memories of Van Gogh and Gauguin: Hartrick's reminiscences', *Van Gogh Museum Journal* 2001, pp. 100, 101.

12. Bernard is said to have left the studio on 6 April: Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh*, p. 211, and Stevens *et al.*, *Emile Bernard*, p. 95.

13. According to Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh*, p. 211, when he was in Brittany Bernard often made a note on his drawings of the month they were done, September being the latest.

14. 'Rentré à Paris, je vais en visite à l'atelier Cormon. Là, un artiste, furieusement, peint. ... C'est Vincent van Gogh.' Emile Bernard, 'Notes sur l'école dite de Pont-Aven', 1903, in E. Bernard, *Propos sur l'art*, 2 vols., Paris 1994, vol. 1, p. 64; see also his 'Souvenirs sur Van Gogh', 1924, in *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 241.

15. 'De retour à Paris de mon premier voyage en Bretagne, je retournai visiter des camarades d'atelier chez Cormon, entre autres Tampier et Toulouse-Lautrec. Je vis là pour la première fois Vincent van Gogh, qui peignait.' Emile Bernard, 'Des Relations d'Émile Bernard avec Toulouse-Lautrec', 1952, in Bernard, *Propos*, vol. 1, p. 318. He continues: 'He worked all morning without respite from the nude model, with the pupils, in the afternoon on the gods of antiquity, alone in the empty studio where there was no one but him, Toulouse-Lautrec, Anquetin and me.' ('Il travaillait sans relâche le matin d'après le modèle nu, avec les élèves, l'après-midi à des antiques dieux, seul dans l'atelier vide où il n'y

avait que lui, Toulouse-Lautrec, Anquetin et moi.') For other quotes in the same vein, see nn. 50-52 of this article.

16. Rewald, *Post-impressionism*, p. 21; and Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh*, p. 212: 'the virtually universal assumption by writers not having attended the Cormon studio with Vincent that he worked there exclusively during Spring, 1886, is open to serious question.'

17. Van Heugten, 'Van Gogh in Antwerpen en Parijs', pp. 21, 22. He rejected the possibility left open by Welsh-Ovcharov in 1976 of a period of study in both spring and late summer. This was argued on the basis of a letter from Theo to his mother dating from late July-early August 1886 (b 942) in which there were encouraging reports of Vincent's progress, albeit with no mention of any study with Cormon. This does not, however, rule out a period of study in the spring. It was by no means Theo's first letter to his mother since Vincent's arrival in Paris, but the earlier letters have not survived.

18. Hulsker, *Lotgenoten*, p. 651 n. 151.

19. Hartrick, *A painter's pilgrimage*, pp. 47, 48.

20. This agrees with what Coquiot, *Vincent van Gogh*, p. 116, asserted in 1923. He could have got this from Van Gogh's letter to Livens [572/459a], since it had already been published in a catalogue accompanying an exhibition of Livens's work in 1914. However, it is unlikely that Coquiot would have been familiar with this publication, which was in English (with thanks to Leo Jansen and Hans Luijten for the information).

21. Bernard stated this in his very first essay on Van Gogh, written in 1889: 'I met him at the time he entered Cormon's studio, where he stayed for two months.' ('Je l'ai connu lors de son passage à l'atelier Cormon où il est resté deux mois.') This essay, intended for *Le Moderniste*, was incorporated in Roland Dorn, 'Bernard on Van Gogh', in Stevens *et al.*, *Emile Bernard*, p. 383.

22. 'De broer van Theo is wel voorgoed hier, hij blijft ten minste voor drie jaren, om op 't atelier van den schilder Cormon te werken.' Letter from Andries Bonger to his parents (b 1841), which was quoted by both Rewald, *Post-impressionism*, p. 23, and Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh*, p. 212. The passage cited was included in *Verzamelde brieven van Vincent van Gogh*, ed. J. van Gogh-Bonger and V. W. van Gogh, 4 vols., Amsterdam & Antwerp 1952-54, vol. 3, p. 171,

no. 462a, with a dating of 1886. Henk Bonger, 'Un Amstellodamois à Paris', in Dieuwke de Hoop Scheffer, Carlos van Hasselt and Christopher White (eds.), *Liber amicorum Karel G. Boon*, Amsterdam 1974, p. 68, narrowed this down to April 1886, whereas Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh*, p. 212, thought that the letter was written after 23 June 1886. An inventory of Bonger's correspondence in the Van Gogh Museum has, however, revealed that the date suggested by Henk Bonger is correct. The letter was written between 5 and 15 April 1886, as can be inferred from identical, ongoing information in two other letters (b 1839 and 1840) that are dated.

23. The passage has always been wrongly interpreted: 'om op't atelier van den schilder Cormon te werken' was translated by Rewald, *Post-impressionism*, p. 23, as 'he intended to work', while Bonger, 'Un Amstellodamois à Paris', p. 68, and Welsh-Ovcharov, *Vincent van Gogh*, p. 212, also used the future tense ('il vient travailler' and 'he is going to work' respectively). Because of Welsh-Ovcharov's dating of the letter after 23 June 1886, this meant that she saw Bonger's remark as an indication that Van Gogh did not go to study with Cormon until the autumn.

24. The one-year stay is referred to in letter 565/454. The practice at Cormon's was different, however: students usually stayed with him for several years. See Destreumeau, 'L'atelier Cormon'.

25. Letter from Andries Bonger to his parents, 17 March 1886 (b 1838): 'Have I already told you that v G's brother, who's working to become a painter, has come here?' ('Heb ik U al geschreven dat v G's broer, die voor schilder werkt, hier gekomen is?')

26. Letter 572/459a. Roland Dorn – tentatively – suggested this in his *Décoration. Vincent van Goghs Werkreihe für das Gelbe Haus in Arles*, 2 vols., (diss. Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, 1985), vol. 1, p. 236 n. 4. Welsh-Ovcharov, *Van Gogh à Paris*, p. 377, app. 4, put forward the same suggestion three years later, albeit with no supporting arguments, after which, despite the scepticism of Pickvance, 'Van Gogh en het pointillisme', p. 97 n. 8, her opinion was taken further by Van Heugten, 'Van Gogh in Antwerpen en Parijs', p. 21. Welsh-Ovcharov's *Vincent van Gogh's letter to Horace Mann Livens*, London 1987, cited in Welsh-Ovcharov, *Van*

Gogh à Paris, p. 398, is in fact an unpublished typescript and was consequently not consulted.

27. Letter 576/Wr. Van Gogh had described the trip in his letter to Livens and had given a possible departure date: 'spring – say February or even sooner' [572/459a]. Since he actually did leave Paris in February 1888, this appeared to be a strong argument to date the letter to the same time as his letter to Willemien.

28. From Theo's letter to his mother of 28 February 1887 it appears that she had assumed that Van Gogh had actually put his idea of leaving that month into effect (b 906). 'You seem to think that Vincent has gone,' wrote Theo. 'That's not the case; he's still here and doesn't seem to be planning to go away in the spring as he had originally planned to do.' ('U schijnt begrepen te hebben dat Vincent weg is. Dat is niet het geval, hij is altijd nog hier en schijnt ook geen plan te hebben om in t' voorjaar naar buiten te gaan zooals hij er eerst plan op had.')

29. With thanks to Hans Luijten and Leo Jansen.

30. The same applies to his sending his regards to four other fellow students at the Antwerp Academy.

31. If park views can be counted as landscapes, these are probably F 223 JH 1111, F 224 JH 1112, F 225 JH 1110, F 229 JH 1176, F 230 JH 1177, F 232 JH 1113, F 239 JH 1267, F 264 JH 1179, F 266 JH 1175, F 273 JH 1116, F 274 JH 1115 and Addenda 2 in Hulsker's oeuvre catalogue of 1996 – a dozen paintings altogether. Admittedly, green and blue do not always predominate in these works, but we should not attach too much significance to this. This mention of the usual colours in this genre arose out of Van Gogh's need to demonstrate that he had recently been concentrating on practising the use of colour. It emerges from his letters 704/547, 760/583b and 780/593 that he sometimes reckoned park views (and even cityscapes) to be landscapes.

32. As we learn from his later letters, Van Gogh always used the word 'impressionism' fairly broadly. He considered that this school included not only the actual impressionists, such as Monet, but also the artists of the more recent generation, including himself.

33. In the summer of 1886 Van Gogh painted some thirty-five flower still lifes. The 'heads', he said, he had done 'lately' – after his flower still lifes; he was probably referring here to two self-portraits, his only studies of heads in this period:

F 180 JH 1194 and F 181 JH 1090.

34. The whole sentence reads: 'I have been in Cormon's studio for three or four months but did not find that so useful as I had expected it to be' [572/459a].

35. Van Heugten, 'Van Gogh in Antwerpen en Parijs', p. 22.

36. Since the conclusion of this article is that Van Gogh studied with Cormon in the spring of 1886, this means that the date of the flower still life can be roughly established at last. We now know that the picture of the nude girl was made before the beginning of June 1886, when he left the studio, and consequently the flower still life dates from prior to that time. But since the type of canvas is typical of Van Gogh's Parisian oeuvre, it must have been painted after he left Antwerp, in other words after 1 March. We are evidently seeing spring flowers, perhaps hyacinths or lilac, as the round shapes in the X-radiograph appear to suggest.

37. The group of flower still lifes of 1886 was painted in the period from the end of June to the middle of September. Even were *Glass with yellow roses* (ill. 6) to have been painted towards the end of this time – in August, say – this has little effect on my reasoning as set out in the body of this article.

38. Aside from the overpainted work, they were F 216a JH 1054, F 216b JH 1060, F 216c JH 1082, F 216d JH 1071, F 216e JH 1078, F 216f JH 1076, and F 216j JH 1059. There are another three extant studies of plaster statuettes, equally small, F 216i JH 1072, F 216g JH 1055 and F 216h JH 1058, but they were done later, in February-March 1887.

39. These eleven drawings, which are smaller than the drawings he made after plaster casts at Cormon's, are discussed by Vellekoop and Van Heugten, *Vincent van Gogh*, cat. 276-286. However, because they dated Van Gogh's time at Cormon's studio to the period from October 1886 to the end of January 1887, these authors dated the drawings to 1887.

40. Ibid., pp. 187, 188. Van Gogh probably did the drawings to accustom himself to the new statuettes, which were smaller than the plaster casts in Cormon's studio.

41. Ibid., cat. 276-281, esp. p. 187.

42. Van Gogh was trying out 'modelling by drawing directly with a brush' ('het modellerend tekenen direct met 't penseel'), as he had described this approach in Antwerp, as a result

of which he 'conceived [figure painting] totally differently from Bouguereau and others, who lack interior modelling, are *flat*' ('het glad anders opvatten dan Bougereaau en anderen, die "intérieur modelé" mankeren, *plat* zijn') [558/447]. He had hoped to get a better grasp of this 'solid modelling' at the Antwerp Academy [560/449], as he did later in Paris with Cormon, but contrary to what he had hoped, in both places more emphasis was placed on the importance of the outline than on the mass.

43. Vellekoop and Van Heugten, *Vincent van Gogh*, date only some twelve small drawings to this period (cat. 225-236). Aside from the works referred to in n. 5, the paintings made in the spring of 1886 in any event include a flower still life (ill. 4), one self-portrait (F 208 JH 1195), two portraits of women (F 215c JH- and F 215d JH-), the portrait of a woman under F 273 JH 1116, two landscapes (F 232 JH 1113 and F 266 JH 1175), and the view of roofs concealed under F 255 JH 1124.

44. Van Gogh's idea of going to study with Cormon immediately he got to Paris is implicit in his correspondence (see n. 1 for a list of his letters on this subject). He wanted to go on with the study of classical statuary as soon as possible after the end of the course in Antwerp, hence the urgency of his requests to move in with Theo. He had originally considered going back to Nuenen, but he no longer wanted to do this once his brother had agreed to his plan to study with Cormon.

45. Van Gogh suggested this in letter 563/452, and repeated it in letter 566/455: 'I can go and draw either in the Louvre or in the Ecole des Beaux Arts.' ('Ik kan in de Louvre of école des Beaux arts teregt voor dat teekenen.') This was prompted solely by Theo's recent message that he could not come until July. At this time Theo was already looking for new accommodation, and the lease on his apartment in rue Laval ran until then (letter 558/447). He thought the old apartment was too small for them to live in together, let alone to use as a studio, hence his suggestion that his brother should not come to Paris immediately. Vincent did not think that this was a good idea at all. He consequently came up with arguments to prove that it made sense for him to come sooner, while trying to avoid appearing too demanding. Had he written that not only did he want to come

sooner, but that he could also perfectly well go and study with Cormon before the move, he would have been going against his brother's suggestions in two respects – and evidently he thought that this might be going too far.

46. Letter 570/459.

47. This solved the problem of the lack of a place of his own to work in until such time as the brothers moved to rue Lepic in June. Jo van Gogh-Bonger suggested – see the body of the article and n. 7 – that this is why Van Gogh stayed with Cormon for longer than he had really wanted to.

48. See n. 21.

49. Viewed from this perspective (it means that Bernard knew Van Gogh as a fellow student for less than a month), and assuming that Van Gogh did not tell Bernard about the short time he spent there until *later*, after they had become friends, Emile's estimate of the length of Vincent's time there as two months makes sense, or is at least understandable.

50. 'Puis chez Tanguy, cette ardente petite chapelle [...] Quand il émergea de l'arrière-boutique, ce front haut et large, j'eus presque peur tant il flamba; mais vite nous fûmes amis.' Emile Bernard, 'Vincent van Gogh', 1890, in *Propos*, vol. 1, p. 26. He repeated this in a manuscript published posthumously: 'He [Van Gogh] had studied at Cormon's studio; I had seen him there painting in "the old manner" [...] I met him again later at Tanguy's.' ('Il avait un fait un stage à l'atelier Cormon; je l'y avais vu peindre dans "la vieille manière". [...] je le rencontrai plus tard chez Tanguy.') ('Affaire Vincent', 1952, in *Propos*, vol. 1, p. 313).

51. See nn. 14 and 15, and Emile Bernard, 'Vincent van Gogh', 1893, in *Propos*, vol. 1, p. 43: 'It was in 1887 [Bernard of course meant 1886] that I met him, in the little funeral chapel that is Papa Tanguy's shop.' ('C'est en 1887 que je l'ai connu, dans la petite chapelle ardente qu'est la boutique du *papa* Tanguy'). He made the same assertion in his 'Louis Anquetin', 1934: 'I had met him at old man Tanguy's, where he was starting to leave some of his work.' ('Je l'avais connu chez le père Tanguy, où il commençait à déposer de ses ouvrages') (*Propos*, vol. 1, p. 274).

52. '[...] ma connaissance de Vincent chez le père Tanguy, alors qu'il était encore étudiant à l'atelier libre de Cormon', Emile Bernard, 'Souvenirs sur Van Gogh', 1924, in *Propos*, vol. 1, p. 241.



1. Paul Gauguin, *Black woman*, 1889, glazed stoneware, Sands Point Preserve, Port Washington, Nassau County, NY; G 91

Against the grain: The sculpture of Paul Gauguin in the context of his contemporaries

June Hargrove

The emphasis on the primitive and non-conformist aspects of the sculpture of Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) has eclipsed its connections with the tradition from which he nominally emerged. Yet he was acutely aware of the work of his contemporaries, embracing or refuting their achievements as he constructed his own style with gleeful disdain for rules. Acknowledging that Gauguin was a true eclectic – in itself a characteristic of the times, this essay focuses on his sculpture in the context of its nineteenth-century counterparts, at the expense of the equally rich subject of relating it to painting – his and others. Since direct links have already been established between Gauguin and other sculptors during the early phase of his career, this discussion gives weight to the later work, probing more indirect and provocative possibilities. The emphasis is less on specific connections than the flow of ideas through milieu and ambience. It reveals how similar ideas stimulate opposing styles and how different artists manifest parallel concepts. These comparisons, cutting both ways, indicate how one artist may assimilate another's work, transposing styles and ideas. They include sculptures that reflect Gauguin's

initiatives, not imitating any one piece by him yet difficult to imagine without his precedent. Some examples provide lessons in paradox, where intersecting ideas produce diametrically opposed results, capable of forming the proverbial circle where extremes meet. Gaining insight into ways that Gauguin partakes of his times makes us see his struggle ‘against the grain’ as all the more remarkable.¹

From the beginning: ‘l’étrange attirance des choses redoutées’

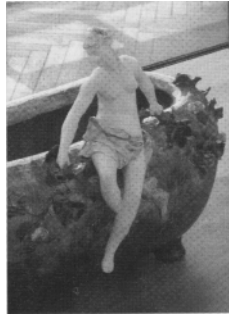
Although Gauguin remains primarily known as a painter, his sculpture merits equal status for its originality and its lasting contributions to the history of art. He shifted from collecting to painting in the mid-1870s, while continuing to work in finance until 1883. He took up sculpture in 1877 when he moved to the impasse Frémin, to his eyes ‘a bit like a cour des miracles’, in the district of Vaugirard, where a number of artists lived.² If Gauguin did not frequent, he knew other sculptors in the neighbourhood. At some point he met Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), who maintained a studio a short distance away at 36 rue des Fourneaux, and Jules Dalou (1838-1902) after the amnesty in 1879.³ In 1880, he moved to the nearby rue Carcel, where he lived for another three years.

His introduction to the formal practice of sculpture came, more or less by chance, through artists who conformed to the prevailing academic realism. He shared a studio with Paul Aubé (1837-1916), a conventional sculptor then in the process of making his historicizing bronze statue of *Dante* (Collège de France, Paris), widely acclaimed in the Salon of 1879. Gauguin learned the rudiments of modelling from Aubé, indifferent to sophisticated techniques such as armatures.⁴ His landlord, Jules-Ernest Bouillot (b. 1837), who earned his living as a studio practitioner, introduced him to marble cutting, realizing part of Gauguin’s marble bust of *Mette* (1879; Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery, London; G 1). The polished realism, typical for the time, displays a level of proficiency beyond that of a novice; however, the collaboration attests that Gauguin’s deviations from the norm sprang from intention rather than incompetence. He soon left the medium of marble behind – not only because of its expense, but also to escape the protocol attached to such a venerable material.⁵ He cultivated his skills as an autodidact, ignoring without scruple the monochromatic strait-jacket that restrained Salon sculpture.

He found the heady atmosphere of liberty in the entourage of Edgar Degas (1834-1917) more to his taste. The early eighties saw a climate receptive to versatile media as well as novel subjects, and Degas’s experiments spurred Gauguin to strike out in new directions. Among the patrons of the café Nouvelle Athènes, the preferred haunt of the avant garde, were artists who exploited materials and techniques spurned by the establishment, such as coloured glass and polychrome wax, championed by Henri Cros (1840-1907) and Jean-Désiré Ringel d’Illzach

(1847-1916).⁶ His widening circle of friends stimulated a change in his artistic ambitions and liberated his choices. Degas was one of his strongest mentors until the middle of the eighties, when the two men fell out, but their sculpture is testimony to their reciprocal influence.⁷ Gauguin manifested a precocious bias for wood, claiming that he had whittled since childhood.⁸ As a material unfettered by tradition, wood was a logical choice for an artist of Gauguin's temperament. It had rarely been used outside of the crafts in France since the Middle Ages, but he savoured its homely potential, suited to rough surfaces and simplified form. He precipitated its revival as a viable medium, but no one matched the aggressive primitivism of his approach until the twentieth century. When Paul Adam wrote in 1886 that Gauguin had 'the strange attraction of frightening things', the latter's works were still relatively tame.⁹

2. Paul Aubé: *Nude*, plaster, attached to Haviland stoneware planter, 1879, Petit Palais, Paris

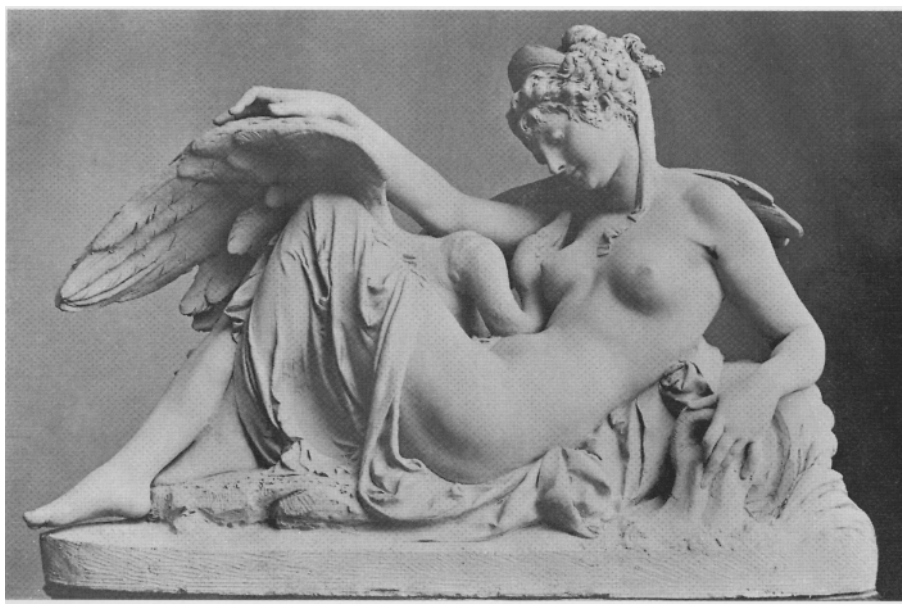


Ceramics: 'mes hautes folies'

Although familiar with the plaster figures that Aubé modelled to adorn Haviland vessels (ill. 2), Gauguin did not try his hand at ceramics until Félix Bracquemond (1833-1914) introduced him in May 1886 to Ernest Chaplet (1835-1909), who had initiated the revival of stoneware for Haviland.¹⁰ For Gauguin, the rustic character of stoneware tallied with his preference for immediate contact with the material. Its grainy surface, which could be left unglazed, allowed him to achieve a more 'primitive' effect, often inspired by the anthropomorphic vessels of pre-Columbian pottery.¹¹ He sometimes applied three-dimensional figures to his own eccentric shapes in a manner oddly reminiscent of Aubé's nudes for Haviland,¹² but his figures are married to the forms in a more symbiotic way, partly because they share the same material. He developed a singular sculptural style, fusing the ornamental with the functional, albeit not truly utilitarian. For example, in his glazed stoneware *Leda* (ill. 3), the swan's neck doubles as the handle of the vessel, which leaves something to be desired as a pitcher. Not that such concerns fazed



3. Paul Gauguin, *Leda*, 1888,
glazed stoneware,
Private collection,
Chicago; G 63



4. Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse, *Leda and the swan*, 1874, terracotta,
whereabouts unknown

Gauguin, who invited Bracquemond to view ‘the little products of the heights of my folly ... You’re going to shriek loudly in front of these monstrosities ...’¹³

Gauguin’s pejorative remarks on Greek art can be misleading. When he counselled Georges-Daniel de Monfreid, ‘Always have before you the *Persians*, the *CAMBODIANS* and a little bit the Egyptian. The big mistake is the Greek, however beautiful it may be ...’, he advocated an encompassing eclecticism.¹⁴ He revered the ancients but felt that imitating them led to a dead end.¹⁵ He struggled with messianic fervour against the academic system, which promoted an endless repetition of post-classical clichés. When he turned to Greek mythology, he did so in his own idiosyncratic way. His *Leda* does not see but senses the swan, whose penile neck signals the puissance of a Jupiter. If she indeed resembles his daughter Aline, as is thought, her pubescent sexuality awakens the spectre of western civilization’s greatest taboos: rape, bestiality, incest.¹⁶ His treatment of the subject is the antithesis of *Leda and the swan* (ill. 4) by Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse (1824-1887), loosely inspired by Michelangelo. Contrary to the attenuated forms and elegant detail of the Carrier-Belleuse pair, Gauguin’s *Leda*, abetted by its unrefined modelling, transgresses social and sexual conventions in ways that were bound up in his artistic identity as an iconoclast. He had already abandoned the potter’s wheel and begun building his shapes by hand.

5. Paul Gauguin,
Self-portrait as Christ,
1889, glazed stoneware,
Museum of Decorative Arts,
Copenhagen; G 65



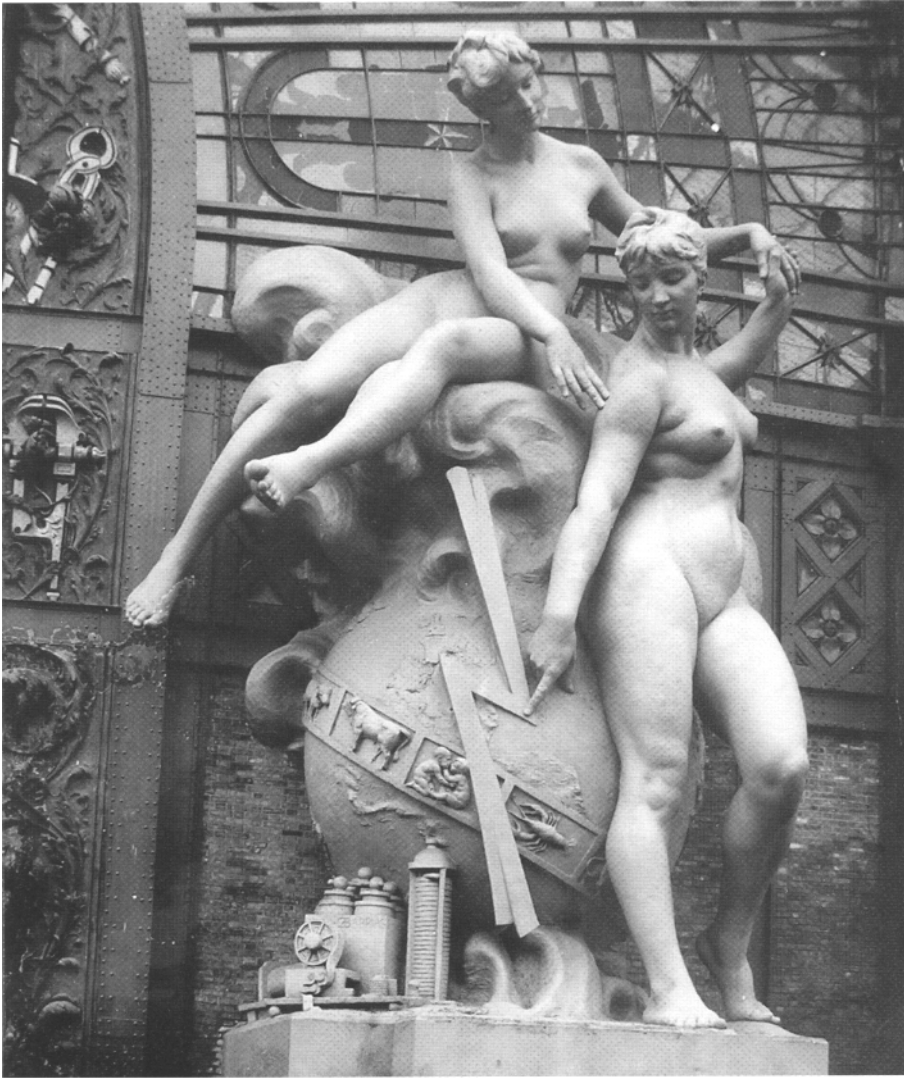
Gauguin recounted meeting Jean Carriès (1855-1894) in Chaplet's workshop during the winter of 1886-87, claiming that Carriès studied his works at length and took away with him 'the possibility of giving new impetus to the art of ceramics by the creation of new hand-made forms ...'¹⁷ Never reluctant to promote himself, Gauguin had an undeniable impact on the younger man.¹⁸ In June 1888 Carriès translated his 1885 wax bust of the *Sleeping faun* into stoneware, emboldened by the other's 'heights of folly'. Abutting the realistic face, the freely defined base emulates Gauguin's haphazard asymmetry. But, admirable as his ceramics are, Carriès never engaged with Gauguin's most radical inventions.

In the spring of 1889 Gauguin continued to explore his unorthodox method of freely fashioning potter's clay, encouraging other ceramicists to undertake 'FORMS of pots different from the familiar mechanical forms'.¹⁹ He seized upon the expressive potential of Chaplet's experiments with glazes, reinforced by the example of Carriès. The latter's exhibition of stoneware at his studio in the Cité Fleurie in February of that year gave Gauguin pause on more than one count, fuelling his fantasy that he could support his family with the sale of his ceramics.²⁰

Masks by Carriès parallel Gauguin's efforts to incorporate portraits into his free-form stoneware sculptures, such as the glazed stoneware *Self-portrait as Christ* (ill. 5).²¹ Gauguin participated in the taste for masks, which grew with the fascination for representations of the severed head, propagated by the symbolist movement. Since the myth of Orpheus, the detached head has carried connotations of the immortality of the creative spirit. Gauguin subverted its anti-sensual meaning to include an element of the physical, particularly allied with the carnal.²² He combined its significance with that of the head of John the Baptist, depicted by many artists, including Rodin and Ringel.²³ The lurid appeal of the decapitated prophet stemmed less from his Christian forbearance than from the lascivious caprice of Salome, the sultry teen whose name is synonymous with *femme fatale*. These heads recall violent martyrdoms, inflected with the passions that provoked them. In the wake of Richard Wagner and Thomas Carlyle, who both propounded the idea of the artist-prophet, the symbolists considered the detached head – pagan or Christian – a metaphor for the artist's role in the new order, a mystical conception of the artist-martyr. Paradigms of the victim/outlaw and the prophet/messiah merge seamlessly with the erotic in this disembodied self-portrait, where rivulets of red copper glaze, appropriately called ox-blood (*sang de bœuf*), drip over closed eyes to collect around the neck. Reminding us that violence is also erotically charged, he incorporated this self-portrait into his pseudo-idol, the *Black woman* (ill. 1), which is monumental in mien, if not in size.²⁴

The 1889 Exposition Universelle, along the banks of the Seine, juxtaposed the stark girders of the Eiffel Tower with the ornate pavilions highlighting the colonial empire that France was acquiring. Spiced by a global array of cultures, the fair sparked new levels of fascination with the exotic among many artists.

It occasioned an amazing collision of old traditions and new technologies, prompting hybrid images, such as Louis-Ernest Barrias's (1841-1905) *Electricity* (ill. 6). Barrias applied two amply endowed female nudes to a globe in a way that, other than their huge scale – nine metres tall – differs little from Aubé's figures attached to the body of a vase. The standing nude puts her finger on a lightning bolt that equates with a spark of electricity, as the two women gingerly touch each other



6. Louis-Ernest Barrias, *Electricity*, 1889, plaster (destroyed)

– generating a circuit. Timeless symbols of the zodiac encircle the world, while an up-to-date generator lends support.

Gauguin launched a tirade against this kind of public sculpture in his erratic memoirs, *Avant et après*: ‘Allegory, symbol, attributes. As far as sculptural monuments go in our good city of Paris, we are really floundering. A writer couldn’t do without his old book and his quill pen. The inventor of an enema pump has to have his enema. If ever they put up a monument to Wells in London, I insist he should have his burning ray. But if they put up a monument tomorrow to Santos Dumont, will it be necessary to sculpt a balloon? And how can they indicate the culture of microbes for Pasteur?’²⁵

Such statues confirmed what Gauguin already knew: it is not enough to update subject matter; modernity necessitates above all a transformation of style. He was not alone in pursuing the exotic, but he redefined eclecticism by integrating the primitive in style as well as motif. The stoneware *Black woman* infringed the banal formulas of current taste. He achieved the transglobal through a mixture



7. Max Klinger, *New Salome*, 1893, plaster and amber, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden



8. Charles Cordier, *African Venus*, 1850, bronze and onyx, Musée de Quai Branly (Musée de l’Homme), Paris

of multicultural references, couched in a figure who flaunts her earthy sensuality in defiance of western aesthetic criteria. The model may be the mulatto woman that he met at the Exposition,²⁶ although she also relates to his earlier depictions of Martiniquais women, capped with a bandana. She borrows her jewellery from the friezes of Borobudur, of which he had photographs.²⁷ Arms clamped to her side, staring straight ahead, she sits on a platform, encircled by an undulating frieze of lotus and animals in Buddhist fashion, yet modern in its low three-dimensionality. The bud of a lotus, an Asian symbol of regeneration, rises toward her lap, evoking ambiguous alternatives – from a serpent to a phallus. Equally troubling, another branch sprouts a head that resembles his earthenware portrait as Christ. The overall composition begs comparison with Carriès's wax *Self-portrait*, where the fictive mask of his mother rests near the truncation at mid-thigh.²⁸ The juxtaposition of the severed head with a voluptuous nude resonates with overtones of the erotic martyrdom of Orpheus and/or John the Baptist.

A Buddhist Salome, full of paradoxes, the *Black woman* unites an astonishing range of sources that transmit the universality of his message. In contrast to the seductive urbanity and adolescent smirk of the *New Salome* (ill. 7), atop two truncated heads, by Max Klinger (1857-1920), the *Black woman* radiates a totemic power, life-giving and life-denying. Typically, Gauguin's associations are polysemous, lending themselves to multiple interpretations. Linking the severed head to the lotus defines the statue as a metaphor for artistic renewal.²⁹ Gauguin's growing awareness of theosophy, with its syncretic religious premises, spurred his synthesis of sources. His incipient interest in Buddhist thought evolved as the theosophical movement spread across western civilization in the 1880s, while he contemplated a Pacific venue for his 'studio of the tropics'. The combination of death and regeneration introduces the theme of the cycle of life to his symbolism, wherein the concept of reincarnation would become the nexus of his spiritual and aesthetic philosophies after he settled in Polynesia.

The ethnographic study of race fostered a marked increase of sculpture depicting non-European peoples in the second half of the century; however, these examples rarely deviate from an antique-based aesthetic, which presupposed refined surfaces, and an idealism that reassured the Eurocentric point of view. The nascent discipline of anthropology galvanized the sculptor Charles Cordier (1827-1905) to undertake works such as his bronze *African Venus* (ill. 8) that delineate racial difference as 'other'.³⁰ Gauguin lacked the financial means to produce marbles or bronzes, but sumptuous materials ran counter to his quest to shake off the constraints of official dictates. The use of wood and clay liberated him from the preconceptions attached to marble in the hierarchy, where whiteness was the spiritual and moral '*sine qua non* of beauty'.³¹ Similarly, the use of non-white prototypes freed him from the social codes of conduct and rules of propriety governing the Beaux-Arts tradition.

The ineffable allure of women of colour touted by Baudelaire in his poems for *Les fleurs du mal*, many celebrating his mulatto mistress Jeanne Duval, enhanced Gauguin's perception of the exotic. Whereas his contemporaries cast these women as ethnic curiosities or marginal signifiers of sexual licence, Gauguin made them central to his art.³² The non-western body facilitated his flight from conventions. Not only does his robust black subject incarnate anti-classical figurative norms, she gives credence to formal means that flout academic training. Even the crackling of the bronze-like glaze, pronounced around her breasts, hints at degeneration.³³ These violations contribute to the statue's aura of sexual promiscuity, a trait ascribed to all native women in the minds of Gauguin and his contemporaries.³⁴ Literature of all genres saturated the market with stereotypical accounts of non-occidental peoples, in tandem with the accumulation of colonial empires by European powers. Gauguin's thinking evidenced his colonial mentality *avant la lettre*.

Be in love, you will be happy: 'pour dire: je t'aime,
il me faudrait casser toutes les dents'

The primitive offered Gauguin the key to a total assault on post-Renaissance conventions, which emerged that autumn in *Be in love, you will be happy* (ill. 9). In the upper right of the polychrome relief, Gauguin's likeness sucking his thumb mirrors his distorted glazed stoneware *Self-portrait as a tobacco jar* (ill. 10). The pre-genital gesture interjects a Freudian note as he forcefully takes possession of a woman of colour, presumably the mulatto that he wrote of meeting.³⁵ The artist left no incertitude about its autobiographical nature, admitting that it signified his sexual remorse.³⁶ Her body is deliberately unidealized, in keeping with his palpable struggle with the wooden panel, wherein she serves as proxy for his estranged wife, Mette. Trapped in the bondage of marriage, sealed by the wedding ring on her finger, she withholds her love, betraying his bitterness as his own breaks down. The duality of the surface, smooth and coarse, bears Gauguin's distinctive stamp, at once suave, naive and brutal. The polished face, surrounded by a crudely defined surface, seems gouged out in haste before the artist added a precious touch of gilding. The sophisticated conjunction of the refined and the non-finito in the technique coincides with the duality of his avowed persona, civilized and savage.³⁷ The handling of the wood and the polychrome highlights show his sustained interest in popular art, nourished by the pervasive influence of the English Arts and Crafts movement. His icon of death, derived from a Peruvian mummy, sits behind the fox, an Indian symbol of perversity.³⁸ The drooping lotus, a parody of the conventional lily, reinforces the discordant note of decadence, as if it has lost its regenerative powers, mimicking the artist's frustration with the personal and professional failures that blighted his future.



9. Paul Gauguin, *Be in love, you will be happy*, 1889, wood, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; G 76



10. Paul Gauguin, *Self-portrait as a tobacco jar*, 1889, glazed stoneware, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; G 66

11. Auguste Préault, *Slaughter*, 1834 (cast 1850), bronze, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres

The sculpture annihilates the artistic canons inherited from the past. The ghost of Auguste Préault (1809-1879) hovers over Gauguin, without any proof of a tangible connection. As the last living hero of the Romantics, Préault attained a status beyond the measure of his oeuvre. His death in 1879 occasioned extensive articles in contemporary art journals, reciting his legendary escapades and aphorisms.³⁹ His most renowned piece, the bronze *Slaughter* (ill. 11) melds orientalist and medieval motifs in a scene of unprecedented ferocity, which announces the proto-primitive. Anticipating the symbolist ethos, Préault abandoned perspective, scale and coherency to enlist the active participation of the viewer.⁴⁰ His goal was not rational, and, above all, not edifying. His composition makes a plausible antecedent for Gauguin's fragmented scene, but its greatest appeal lay in the circumstances surrounding its debut. *Slaughter* was infamous as the example cited in the Academy of what NOT to do, a pedigree that could not fail to pique Gauguin's empathy.⁴¹

The aesthetic of the 'ugly' espoused by Rodin undermined the status quo at a time when Gauguin aspired to liberate his art from any vestige of the canon. Both men admired the sculpture of antiquity, but each defied the traditional concept of beauty in his own way. Rodin's decrepit bronze *She who was once the helmet-maker's beautiful wife* (ill. 12) shares the iconoclastic spirit of Gauguin's feminine subject,





12. Auguste Rodin,
*She who was once the
helmet-maker's beautiful
wife*, 1883, bronze,
Musée Rodin, Paris

where nostalgia for the past is likewise laced with the bitterness of the present. Despite the differences in handling the women's bodies, one Rubensian, the other shrivelled,⁴² the comparison points to the challenges that the two sculptors posed to the mandated recipes for the ideal. The absence of the poignancy of *The helmet-maker's wife* in Gauguin's panel lays bare his cutting irony. *Be in love...* has the visceral punch of the man who said, 'to say "I love you" would break my teeth.'⁴³

Gauguin's sculpture oscillates between profundity and parody, anticipating the modern. The wooden bust of *Meijer de Haan* (ill. 13), known to Gauguin and his French friends as Jacob Meyer de Haan, is often weighted on the side of sarcasm, insinuating that Gauguin was jealous of his friend's liaison with Marie Henry, the innkeeper at Le Pouldu, where the two men were living in the autumn of 1889. But De Haan (1824-1901) was her lover before bringing his friend to the hotel, where Gauguin turned his attentions to the maid.⁴⁴ The Dutch painter subsidized Gauguin in exchange for advice about art. Nonetheless, the teacher benefited from the pupil's erudition and familiarity with philosophical texts, rather as he had previously with Vincent van Gogh. Thus the portrait of Meijer de Haan reflects the



13. Paul Gauguin,
Meijer de Haan, 1889, wood,
National Gallery of Canada,
Ottawa; G 86

pseudo-science of phrenology, the Enlightenment theory that character and intellect are visible in the shape of the skull, widely believed in the nineteenth century; for example, Pierre-Jean David d'Angers (1788-1856) exaggerated the forehead to endow his sitters, such as *Goethe* (1829; Musée d'Orsay, Paris) with the persona of genius. The emphasis on the cranium, a remnant of this phrenological truism, in conjunction with the pose of the hand on the chin, imbues De Haan with the aura of a meditating sage. The half-closed eyes conjure up the visionary prophet who relies on his inner eye, creating art from memory and imagination rather than the observation of nature.⁴⁵

The bust occupied the chimney mantle of the dining room, the place of honour in the elaborate decor realized by the two artists and their friends living in Le Pouldu. Its central placement belies the assumption that the portrait satirizes the hunchbacked Dutchman. Rather than deprecating De Haan, his demonic appearance brings to mind the fallen angel Lucifer, central to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, one of the books in the painted portrait of him by Gauguin, a few feet away on the same wall.⁴⁶ The face surges out of the wooden block, left visible to assert the



14. Alexandre Falguière, *Eve*, 1880, marble, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen

transformation of the raw material through the artist's intervention.⁴⁷ The rough-hewn termination anticipates the abrupt cut of the bases of the later 'ultra-savage sculptures'.

In wood rather than clay, the painted *Meijer de Haan* is the descendant of the 'celebrities of the *juste milieu*' by Honoré Daumier (1808-1879), famous since his 1878 retrospective at the Durand-Ruel Gallery.⁴⁸ Gauguin understood that 'Daumier sculpts irony'.⁴⁹ The rejection of accepted standards, the crudeness of handling and the expressionist treatment of the facial features mark the subject with the verve of Daumier's caricatures. Gauguin played on the word *haan*, which means cock in Dutch. The bird peeking over the head of the 'rooster' could refer to Marie Henry, De Haan's muse and 'poule' (the French word for hen is slang for mistress). Her portrait by Meijer de Haan hung on the end wall of the room, part of a decorative scheme full of sexual *double entendre*.⁵⁰



15. Odilon Redon,
*Death: "My irony
surpasses all
others"*, transfer
lithograph, 1888

Although Gauguin did have recourse to the subject of Eve, no literary trap-pings mitigate the fatal carnality of the 1890 figure entitled simply *Lust* (ill. 16). A blatant attack on the prevailing definition of beauty, *Lust* makes a mockery of classicizing marbles, exemplified by the 'stunning success' of the *Eve* (ill. 14) by Alexandre Falguière (1831-1900) in the 1880 Salon.⁵¹ Nevertheless, reciprocal prejudices concerning the dangers inherent in the female sex are embedded in both statues. Eve strikes a svelte studio pose, her arm over her head. Sabotaging this inherited vocabulary, Gauguin created a pastiche of Odilon Redon's print *Death: "My irony surpasses all others"* (ill. 15) with the gesture of a Javanese dancer from the 1889 fair.⁵² Instead of coy posturing, a primeval sensuality spills into *Lust*, where the woman of colour stimulates the thrill and the danger of the exotic, in the spirit of Baudelaire. When Jens Ferdinand Willumsen (1863-1958) saw *Lust*, he assumed that Gauguin chose the title 'because the woman was inhaling the



16. Paul Gauguin, *Lust*, 1890, wood,
J.F. Willumsens Museum,
Frederikssund; G 88



17. Jens Ferdinand Willumsen,
*Prostitute awaiting her prey in the
'Montagnes Russes'*, 1890, polychrome
wood, J.F. Willumsens Museum,
Frederikssund

perfume of a flower'.⁵³ This allusion probably also sprang from Redon, whose 1889 print *The scent of evil* depicts a dark-skinned woman who holds a flower to her face, tapping into Baudelaire's synaesthesia.⁵⁴ The protean energy of Gauguin was such that multiple influences sparked his creative energies. With his sensitivity to print imagery, the practice of woodcarving encouraged him to try his hand at woodblock prints in the early stages of their revival.

Gauguin strips away the niceties of style along with the biblical justification for his nude hacked out of a primitive block of wood. On the base, his foxy surrogate, frequently invoked after *Be in love...*, reiterates the salacious bent of the *femme fatale*.⁵⁵ For his adjacent signature, he carved a large PGO, a riff on his initials, pronounced 'pego.' The term 'pego' is sailor's slang for the male sex.⁵⁶ The wry humour of identifying himself with a rude euphemism would not escape Gauguin, but he was entirely serious in his analogy between creation and procreation. The allure of the primitive facilitated Gauguin's freedom of technique, as well as his break with Renaissance proportions, although not until he was living in the South Pacific did he capture the physical specifics of the non-European body. Six years later he placed a large clay variation of *Lust* in front of his house at Punaauia in Tahiti, ridiculing the pretensions of the local lawyer Auguste Goupil, who embellished his lawn with reproductions of ancient statuary.⁵⁷

Recycling favourite motifs across media and over time, Gauguin frequently depicted his sculptures in his paintings. Nor was he unique: Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) so indulged his taste for polychromy. But for Gauguin, self-references were more than coquetry; they amplify the meaning of his work. The inclusion of *Lust* in an oil painting, now known as *Caribbean woman with sunflowers* (1889; Private collection; W 330), which was part of the decor of the inn at Le Pouldu, suggests a more complex network of meanings than might at first be apparent. The oversized sunflowers in the background inescapably elicit the memory of Vincent van Gogh. The first appellation, *La femme caraïbe*,⁵⁸ plays on the question raised by Baudelaire. Gauguin turned the tables on the critic's famous polemic, 'Why sculpture is tiresome', that dismisses the sculpture of the day in terms of vapid fetishes, 'un art de Caraïbes'.⁵⁹ He transgressed academic precepts, which he perceived as hackneyed, through the emulation of the primitive. In this canvas, specifically evoking the Caribbean, the artist painted his own statue against a sun-filled floral background, like wildly colourful wallpaper. He trafficked in notions of painting and sculpture, decorative and symbolic, and primal and modern in subtle ways.

When Gauguin repeated the amputated legs of the broken plaster⁶⁰ of *Lust* in carving the wooden version, he validated the initial mistake: the awkward, the inept, the accidental, like the primitive, resonated with authenticity. That Gauguin never mastered proper technical procedures stems from more than indifference: he reported that 'Gérôme tells me: "Listen. The big thing in sculpture is to calculate its armature correctly." What do you say to that Rodin?'⁶¹ This anecdote reveals

both his impatience with received wisdom and his appreciation for Rodin's innovations, particularly the fragment as object.⁶² Rodin's sculpted fragments, such as the bronze *Torso* (1877/1887; Petit Palais, Paris), fostered a new attitude to partial figures such as *Lust*.

In Gauguin's eyes, Falguière epitomized a sclerotic routine of regurgitating lessons derived from the antique. In *Avant et après* he denigrated the full-size plaster of Falguière's *Triumph of the Revolution*, hoisted onto the Arc de Triomphe on 14 July 1882: 'At the competition for the famous chariot to ornament the arch I saw Falguière's maquette. It was, as they say, staggeringly good. The horses had a suppleness to their rumps that enchanted us. Once the sculpture was in place I could only see the bellies of the horses. When I remarked on this to a well-known sculptor, he replied, "After all, a figure situated up there has to be identical to a living person situated up there!" Hum! Hum!'⁶³ Gauguin despised blind adherence to rules that make no sense from another perspective.

Before leaving Paris, Gauguin exchanged the statuette of *Lust* with Willumsen for a painting. The Dane admits that his friend's *Be in love...* inspired his own wood panel *Prostitute awaiting her prey in the 'Montagnes Russes'* (ill. 17).⁶⁴ From the seventies, when Degas, among others, introduced the subject, representations of the prostitute had grown in popularity as a perverse sister of the *femme fatale*. The rooster, the predator-cum-prey, is inserted as an old symbol of lust in a modern scene. Although the painting of the prostitute here is more naturalistic, the style has affinities with Gauguin and the Nabis, young artists who gravitated to Gauguin's orbit around 1890. The coarse cutting of the wood denotes the woman's degenerate status. The pronounced gouges contradict the luxury of gilt and silvered areas, à la Gauguin, but the shallower relief imitates the Nabis. Willumsen's ceramics would also build on Gauguin's precedent.⁶⁵

The Nabis were much influenced by Gauguin, without sharing his jaundiced perspective. In the polychrome wood *Audi filia* (1889; Musée départemental Maurice Denis, Le Prieuré, Saint-Germain-en-Laye), Maurice Denis (1870-1943) borrows his deliberately naive approach to pit the purity of the veiled nun praying at the crucifix against the vanity of the two stylish women below. True to Gauguin, he exposes the wood graining in places, and the simplification of figures conforms to the compact space. None of the Nabis undertook such carvings until Gauguin smashed the barriers that converted the absence of refinement into a virtue. Nor did most of them pursue the technique beyond a few experiments.

Sculptures ultra sauvages

After Gauguin went to Tahiti in 1891, his sculptures were almost exclusively in wood. Besides its advantages of durability and accessibility, the medium suited his ambitions. He announced his 'sculptures ultra sauvages', permeated with a primitive eroticism in form and content.⁶⁶ They exploit an ingenious amalgam of cross-cultural sources, exemplified in *Homage to Mallarmé* (ill. 18). When Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) published his poem 'L'après-midi d'un faune' in 1876, the mythological subject assumed a contemporary energy. Gauguin's perversion of Greek mythology through the overt repudiation of the antique mocks what he perceived to be an obsolete praxis. The faun's legendary unrestrained sexual appetites, mingled with its potential as a symbol of a lost golden age,⁶⁷ lent itself to Gauguin's cherished topos of the intersection of the libido and the artistic imagination. He shaped the cylinder as a lingam, the centrepiece of Hindu fertility rituals, to represent the prevailing tradition of 'the phallus as the origin of the world'.⁶⁸ Crude passages in the handling, especially around the base, capture the pantheistic character of Oceanic art. In one of his witty visual puns, he crowns the totem with his signature PGO to assert his male creative prowess. The prancing fauns echo Mallarmé's poem with a sensual exuberance worthy of the musical composition by Claude Debussy, written two years later and choreographed in the twentieth century by Nijinsky for the Ballets Russes.

Representations of the phallus are more conspicuous in eastern cultures, particularly in India, but its associations with fecundity and sexuality were prevalent in the west. Dalou employed the dual connotations of the shaft in his plaster maquettes for a *Monument to labour*, noting in his diary, 'The general arrangement would be derived from the attribute of Priapus, god of gardens, emblem of creation, of the stone that marks the birth and death of the poor, and finally of the chimney of the factory where his life is spent.'⁶⁹ Thus the male generative force was aligned with the productive emblem of the factory chimney. Both men endorsed a sexual metaphor to invoke the creative process, but, as Gauguin quipped, Dalou made everything republican.⁷⁰ Even the priapic. Quips aside, the statues of labourers, intended for the niches around the obelisk, recall the rural workers that Gauguin pictured in Brittany. Dalou's politics add an incongruous note to the denouement of this unfulfilled project to honour the working man: the *Peasant* materialized as a luxury product by the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres in 1904.⁷¹

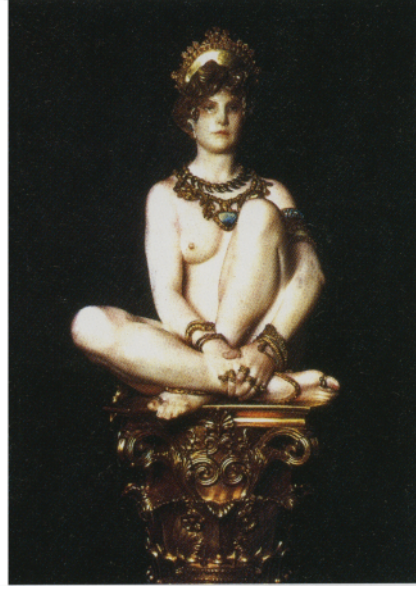
Gauguin's stature among younger artists could only have dismayed those at the pinnacle of France's artistic hierarchy, such as Gérôme. Gérôme had vociferously opposed the Caillebotte bequest to the Musée du Luxembourg, which had recently refused Gauguin's Tahitian canvas *la orana Maria* (1892; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; W 428).⁷² If Gérôme harboured negative sentiments, they were mutual – Gauguin ridiculed Gérôme for his 'archaeological precision'.⁷³



18. Paul Gauguin, *Homage to Mallarmé*, 1892, wood, Maison Mallarmé, Vulaines-sur-Seine; G 100



19. Paul Gauguin, *Idol with shell*, 1892, wood, shell and bone, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; G 99



20. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Corinth*, 1904, marble (the picture on the left shows one version of the work in the sculptor's studio), photographs from the Gerald M. Ackerman collection

Yet, despite their differences, they share odd parallels, strengthened by their dual vocations as painter-sculptors.⁷⁴

The affinities between Gauguin's *Idol with a shell* (ill. 19) and Gérôme's *Corinth* (ill. 20) demonstrate their common cultural patrimony, just as the dichotomies map Gauguin's renunciation of the classical legacy that the other perpetuated. Both statues are seated nudes enhanced with incrustations that proclaim their dangerous exoticism.⁷⁵ Fantasized icons of decadent cultures, they imitate remote sources from an irretrievable past. The fourth-century BC courtesan Lais personifies Corinth, a synecdoche for the city's prohibitive costs, 'Non licet omnibus adire Corinthum' ('Not everyone can go to Corinth'). The deity Ta'aroa, delineated by Gauguin in *Ancien culte mahorie* (1893), once reigned supreme over a Polynesian pantheon now eradicated by Christianity.⁷⁶ Whereas Lais wears a tiara, the Tahitian god sits under the dome of heaven, symbolized by the shell. Her gilded parure, set with coloured stones, emphasizes her nakedness; his shell pectoral and the tattoos across his legs affirm his Oceanic identity. The Corinthian capital with its acanthus decor, atop a column, serves as her pedestal, homologous with the city of her fame; Ta'aroa sits in a throne supported around the back by a row of *tiki*-like heads below dancing celebrants of his cult. Her limbs intersect at

her sex, shielding her anatomical capital in a pose typical of the *faux pudeur* that Gauguin detested; Ta'aroa augments his religious aura with the calm pose of a Buddha. The tinted marble of her skin strives to deceive, while the awkward treatment of the wooden figure stresses the process of its creation. The idol assumes a phallic shape, inscribed with the authority of PGO, signed on the head, linking the creative capacity of the artist to that of the god. In *Ancien culte mahorie*, Ta'aroa, creator the world, sits with an erect penis, equating the divine with sexual vitalism and artistic aptitude.⁷⁷ Gauguin implied that for western civilization, sex exists as a commercial transaction, whereas for the primitive, it remains fundamental to the universe. Gérôme's opulent marble exudes the fabled luxury of Corinth, while *Idol with a shell* owes its particulars to the reputed Marquesan custom of cannibalism.⁷⁸ The shock value of the sharp teeth, salvaged from a parrot-fish, animates his diminutive fetish.⁷⁹ Both try to *Be* what they *Are*. Whereas the orientalism of Gérôme translated exotic *richesse* into the soigné language of academic sculpture, Gauguin assimilated the immediacy of the primitive into his own sophisticated strategies.

This primitivism had a direct impact on Georges Lacombe (1868-1916), who worked consistently in wood after he saw Gauguin's exhibition at Durand-Ruel's gallery in November 1893. Following Gauguin's path, he subverted the realist tendency of polychromy to intensify the subjective, underscoring his primordial message through the rough carving of the wood. In *Isis* (ill. 21), the mother goddess with her bounty of red milk stands on a skull, marking the transition from death to rebirth that engenders true life.⁸⁰ The theosophical principle of reincarnation recurs frequently in Gauguin's art, but Lacombe was inclined to the more occult mysticism of the Nabis.⁸¹ His surface is more linear, but the frontality and symmetry of *Isis*, the obvious carving and the use of colour are indebted to Gauguin, as is the physical type of his figures.⁸² Lacombe remained faithful to the style pioneered by his precursor.

Oviri: Séraphîtüs / Séraphîta

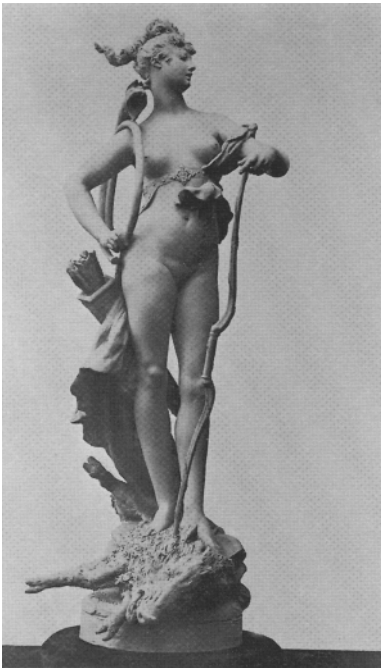
Late in 1894, during his return to Paris, Gauguin modelled a stoneware sculpture, *Oviri* (ill. 23), a monstrous *femme fatale* trampling a dead wolf as she clutches the whelp to her thigh. *Oviri* means savage in Tahitian, and the mayhem of death and violation that she perpetrates fits the title. The crude amalgamation of a fertility goddess with a grotesque head, based on a Marquesan chief's mummified skull,⁸³ looms as depraved as the murderous scene. The splattered glaze (*sang de bœuf*) conveys her innate ferocity, wrenching the cub from its slaughtered parent, more graphically than the blood it represents. The symbols of death and birth externalize the eternal dynamic of destruction and creation that Gauguin advanced in



21. Georges Lacombe, *Isis*, 1894, wood, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

his artistic credo.⁸⁴ The violence intrinsic to *Oviri* fuels the erotic tension that underscores her agency in the life cycle, reiterated by the vaginal orifice in the statue's back.⁸⁵ The generative capacity of her sex fuses with the procreative faculty of the artist, whose masculine presence determined the phallic contours of her silhouette, ratified by the bold *pgo* at her feet. Gauguin's theosophy embraced the complementary nature of the sexes, in accord with Polynesian beliefs, where the union of male and female constitutes the universe, 'the one active, the other passive, or the soul and the body; the one spiritual and hidden, the other material and visible. ...'⁸⁶ The symbolic conflation tapped one of the artist's preferred motifs, the Marquesan *tiki* or *ti'i*, 'a human figure carved in a form suggestive of a phallus'.⁸⁷ Philippe Peltier applies the 'sexual indeterminacy' of the *ti'i* to the concept (if not the statue) of *oviri*, explaining: 'The phallus is at the origin of the world; it is the active principle that fecundates the earth. The female sex is a profane receptacle....'⁸⁸

A related self-portrait dispels any doubt over the statue's significance for Gauguin. The word *Oviri*, flanked by *pgo* and a tumescent floral emblem, appears above his 'Inca' profile in the plaster relief. Together the two works mythologize his metamorphosis through 'the destruction of the civilized self and the rejuvenation of the savage'.⁸⁹ However positive this mutation from civilized to savage may have been for the artist, *Oviri* makes palpable the man's conflicted emotions,



22. Albert-Ernest Carrier-Belleuse,
Diana triumphant, 1884, terracotta,
whereabouts unknown

begging identification and repulsion. When he christened the statue *la tueuse* (the murderess), he incriminated her in his disastrous personal circumstances – not the least of which was the diagnosis of syphilis that literally incarnates the *femme fatale*.⁹⁰

Gauguin clung to the illusion that his ceramics would prove lucrative. His hopes seem ludicrous given popular taste, exemplified by the neo-rococo *Diana triomphant* (ill. 22), 1884, by Carrier-Belleuse. Although Charles Morice called Gauguin's figure *Diane chasseresse*,⁹¹ and both sculptures represent a nude goddess standing on a dead animal, the likeness ends there. A modified version of Carrier-Belleuse's *Diane* was produced as part of a table decor in biscuit for Sèvres, where he had been artistic director.⁹² Without naming the latter, Gauguin heaped scorn on his designs: 'Sèvres, not to name names, has killed ceramics. No one wants them, and when some Kanaka ambassador comes along, bang, they stick a vase in his arms, the way a mother-in-law would fling her daughter at you, to get rid of her. Everybody knows this, but Sèvres is inviolable: it's the glory of France.'⁹³ Gauguin's later vilification of the factory should be seen as a riposte to the rejection of *Oviri* by the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts for the Salon of 1895.⁹⁴ Moreover, the society's concurrent retrospective for Carriès compelled Gauguin to insist upon his preponderant role in revolutionizing the potter's art.⁹⁵

Gauguin's aspirations seem more credible in light of the contemporary *Orangutan strangling a savage from Borneo* (ill. 24) by Emmanuel Frémiet (1824-1910), produced in glazed stoneware by the firm of Emile Muller.⁹⁶ The ceramic replicated the group commissioned on a large-scale in polychrome marble for the Paris Museum of Natural History. The gory confrontation of man and beast ensues from anthropological debates, accelerated by the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of species*.⁹⁷ Diverse images inspired by his theory of the survival of the fittest proliferated in the succeeding decades, but the brutal deformations and primitive sources of *Oviri* were too unsettling to appeal to mainstream taste.

The *Oviri* bears a resemblance to Rodin's bronze *Balzac* (1898; Musée Rodin, Paris), which is less surprising given their common point of departure, the archetypal phallus. Their analogous profiles corroborate the artists' common assumption about the relationship between virility and genius. No other sculptors of the nineteenth century embody this concept more unequivocally than these two men. Rodin achieved a *Balzac* that rises into a 'fountainhead of creative power'.⁹⁸ Gauguin fashioned *Oviri*, towering erect over the bloody corpse of the wolf, whose cub she holds in the balance, as the male/female composite of his regenerative metaphors for the creative process. Morice claimed that after Gauguin had studied *Balzac*, he concluded: 'Rodin went to a lot of trouble to maintain realism in circumstances where this was actually impossible, since, after all, he hadn't known Balzac; his work is beautiful in spite of himself, in spite of his realist standpoint, because of the massive expressiveness of the block, a kind of symbolic affirmation



23. Paul Gauguin, *Oviri*, 1894, stoneware, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; G 113



24. Emmanuel Frémiet, *Orangutan strangling a savage from Borneo*, 1895, glazed stoneware, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, NJ

of power. But then, what's the use of killing yourself to discover an objective truth that's out of reach? Myself, I would have made a giant, and in the two hands of the giant I would have placed two little monsters: *Séraphitus et Séraphita*.⁹⁹ Given that Rodin finalized *Balzac* in 1898, well after Gauguin had returned to the South Pacific, the anecdote is dubious, if not apocryphal. Yet Morice put his finger on Gauguin's grasp of Balzac's contribution to the symbolist generation, a point the artist rendered explicit when he annotated a drawing of *Oviri*: 'And the monster embracing its creation impregnated her generous womb with his seed to father *Séraphitus Séraphita*.'¹⁰⁰ The reference to Balzac's 1835 novel *Séraphita* ties the gender fusion of *Oviri* to Balzac's androgynous angel, a theme dear to the symbolists' fascination with creative androgyny.

In his reminiscences, Gauguin made a pithy aside concerning the progenitor of the *Balzac*: 'But Rodin, if not the greatest sculptor, at least one of the few great sculptors of our age, rejected by the men of letters! That appals me more than the Martinique disaster.'¹⁰¹ If Morice is to be believed, Rodin was not as generous, dismissing the other's wooden sculpture at the 1906 retrospective: 'Gauguin, it's a curiosity.'¹⁰²

Maison du Jouir: '... débarrassé des honnêtes gens'

Gauguin's last major undertaking in sculpture was the decor for the *Maison du Jouir* (ill. 26), his house at Atuona, Hiva Oa, in the Marquesas Islands. The five wooden panels around the entrance summarize Gauguin's persistent adaptations of the biblical account of the Temptation and the Fall of Man, signalling the loss of paradise triggering the life cycle. Irony permeates these highly personal reliefs, compacting a decade of symbolic motifs.

The monumental portal by Carriès, the so-called *Parsifal Gate* (ill. 25), to be made in glazed stoneware, could not have slipped Gauguin's notice at the posthumous 1895 retrospective. Commissioned by the princess of Sceaux-Montbéliard in 1889, the ensemble surrounded the entry to a room reputedly meant to house Richard Wagner's manuscript for *Parsifal*.¹⁰³ No evidence substantiates this destination, but it attests to the pervasive effect of Wagner's ideas on *fin-de-siècle* art. Antoinette Le Normand-Romain speculates of the central figure of the *demoiselle*, 'Does she not conjure up, as Wagner might have wished, the triumph of good and purity over the forces of evil?'¹⁰⁴ The architectural structure of the portal was made up of a bizarre assortment of grimacing masks, inspired by 'primitive' sources ranging from the Middle Ages to China and Japan, comparable to those endorsed by Gauguin. Likewise, Carriès employed the free play of the grotesque to kindle emotional responses in the manner of Gauguin.¹⁰⁵ Carriès's portal mimics the 'apotropaic' figures that the Greeks used to ward off the profane.¹⁰⁶ However, in

the *Maison du Jouis*, Gauguin twisted the apotropaic to frighten the self-righteous: 'Nail an obscenity conspicuously on your door: you will henceforth be rid of honest folk, the most unbearable that God created.'¹⁰⁷

The commission in 1880 by the French government from Rodin for monumental doors for a museum of decorative arts resulted in a sculpture that was never finished for a building that was never begun. Nonetheless, the bronze *Gates of Hell* (1881/1900; Musée Rodin, Paris) cast a long shadow across sculpture into the next century. Although Gauguin's familiarity with the *Gates of Hell* is debatable, he must have had some sense of the ensemble, which scarcely changed after 1881. Even if Gauguin never visited the official studio on the rue de l'Université, where Rodin modelled the *Gates*, he would have seen portions exhibited publicly in Paris almost from the beginning.¹⁰⁸ Rodin was the sculptor whose shuffling of forms most closely resembles Gauguin's mode – however dissimilar their styles. His reworking of figures, moving them on and off the *Gates of Hell*, shares something of Gauguin's pattern of recycling motifs and themes.

Even in his remote outpost, Gauguin avidly read the *Mercure de France* and corresponded extensively with friends. He could hardly have been ignorant of the renewed stir excited by the *Gates of Hell* in Rodin's 1900 exhibition at the Pont de l'Alma. The very notion of a portal marks a transition from one realm to another, and with the symbolist movement that passage shifted from external reality to an inner world of the imagination and dreams, the irrational and the unconscious. Gauguin surely conceived his doorway against the foil of what was arguably the most famous sculpture of its day. The two men shared the conflicted views of lapsed Catholics, which framed their respective attitudes toward the events narrated in Genesis and the hell on earth it precipitated.¹⁰⁹ Both artists gave form to the intensely subjective drives propelling their divergent creative impulses. Their iconography revolves around tales of suffering and death precipitated by physical appetites, arising from sexual urges. Each in his own way envisioned hell as the consequence of human desires. By referencing the *Gates*, Gauguin would amplify the psychological profundity of his infinitely more modest portal, while insisting upon his unique creativity.

From the outset, although this was not commonly known, Rodin wanted statues of Adam and Eve without pedestals in front of the doors.¹¹⁰ This placement of the first couple foregrounds their fate as agents of the biblical loss of innocence, which unleashed the human lusts and emotional turbulence that Rodin splayed across the *Gates of Hell*. For the *Maison du Jouis*, Gauguin carved wooden statues of *Père Paillard* (1902; National Gallery of Art, Washington; G 136) and *Thérèse* (location unknown; G 135). These wooden portraits satirize Bishop Martin and his housekeeper/mistress, whose sexual alliance did not deter the prelate from castigating the artist for his promiscuity. Gauguin retaliated by placing their caricatures in plain sight.¹¹¹ When he situated them on the ground, flanking the ladder leading



25. Jean Carriès, *Parsifal Gate*, 1890-94, watercolour rendering,
courtesy of Patrice Bellanger

to the panelled entry on the second floor, could he have had Rodin's pair in mind? While we can be confident that he knew of the *Gates*, and he undoubtedly saw *Adam* and *Eve* when they were exhibited in the 1880s,¹¹² his knowledge of their projected setting remains speculative.¹¹³ For Gauguin, this act of appropriation would have been for his own amusement – a concept at odds with Rodin's high-minded seriousness about the nature of sculpture. Even without Rodin's prototypes, Gauguin's couple doubles as a parody of Adam and Eve, a sardonic prelude to the carved threshold of his bedroom. Their autobiographical content exposes his personal investment in the topos of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

That Gauguin's final sculptural endeavour finds a kinship with one of the greatest sculptors of his era marks a fitting conclusion to his oeuvre. Despite their radical differences, Rodin and Gauguin each contributed innovations that reorientated sculpture for future generations. Gauguin made the primitive more than a distant titillation. His revolutionary approach to materials and techniques, notably in wood and ceramics, was so audacious that only in the next century did sculptors dare follow his lead. As original and eclectic as he was, to situate him in the matrix of his contemporaries is instructive, revealing ways in which he both intersects and diverges from them. Perhaps Préault's detractors had a point – an artist can learn as much from what he disdains as from what he admires. Certainly this was so for Gauguin.



26. Paul Gauguin, *Maison du Joueur*, 1902, wood, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; G 132

NOTES

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1. My title, 'Against the grain', plays on the translation of the title of Joris-Karl Huysmans's symbolist novel *A rebours*, Paris 1884.
2. 'un peu cour des miracles' (a low-life haunt). Paul Gauguin, *Avant et après*, Paris 1995, p. 208. See Victor Merlhès, *Correspondance de Paul Gauguin: Documents, témoignages*, vol. 1, Paris 1984, p. 330, n. 9. Ironically the names of impasse Frémin and rue des Fourneaux have been changed to Cité Falguière and rue Falguière, in honour of a sculptor that Gauguin scorned (see n. 63). The three-room apartment at 8 rue Carcel came with a studio.
3. Ruth Butler, *Rodin, the shape of genius*, New Haven 1993, maps Rodin's studios in the frontispiece. Haruko Hirota, 'De la poterie à la sculpture, Aubé, Carriès, et Gauguin', *Histoire de l'art*, no. 50 (June 2002), p. 118 n. 6, summarizes sources pertinent to Rodin and Dalou.
4. Laurence Madeline, *Ultra-sauvage, Gauguin sculpteur*, Paris 2002, pp. 139, 144, summarizes his technical difficulties and then notes that they might reflect artistic volition. Similarly, Degas was notoriously indifferent to techniques.
5. Christopher Gray, *Sculpture and ceramics of Paul Gauguin*. Baltimore 1963, p. 2, attributes the change from marble to wood to the fact

that Bouillot's studio was not as accessible after Gauguin moved. But since he continued to see both Bouillot and Aubé, he could have pursued stone-cutting had he wished.

6. Merlhès, *Correspondance*, pp. 14, 334 n. 28, notes Gauguin's presence at the Nouvelle Athènes. For examples of experimental works, see exhib. cat. *The colour of sculpture 1840-1910*, Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) & Leeds (Henry Moore Institute) 1996; and Phillip Dennis Cate, exhib. cat. *Breaking the mold: Sculpture in Paris from Daumier to Rodin*, Rutgers (Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum) 2005.
7. Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, in Richard R. Brettell and Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, exhib. cat. *Gauguin and impressionism*, Copenhagen (Ordrupgaard Museum) & Fort Worth (Kimbell Art Museum) 2005, pp. 129-31, thoroughly analyzes this sculpture and other early works. See also *Ordrupgaard Focus* (English edition), no. 1 (September 2005), for essays by her and Richard Kelton.
8. The black chalk drawing by Camille Pissarro, *Gauguin carving 'Woman strolling'*, 1880, is in the National Museum, Stockholm. The sculpture depicted is in the Richard Kelton Foundation collection, Los Angeles. Gauguin, *Avant et après*, p. 244, claimed to have sculpted since childhood. Richard Thomson, 'The sculpture of Camille Pissarro', *Source* 2, no. 4 (summer 1983), pp. 25-28, offers further evidence of the shared interest in three dimensions between the two at the time.
9. 'Étrange attirance des choses redoutées'. Paul Adam, 'Peintres impressionnistes', *Revue contemporaine*, 5 May 1886.
10. Merlhès, *Correspondance*, no. 99 (letter to Mette, first part of June 1886), p. 126.
11. Gray, *Sculpture and ceramics*, pp. 20-22.
12. Gauguin's portrait of Aubé with his son (1882; Petit Palais, Paris; W 66) depicts him modelling a similar figure for a vase.
13. Merlhès, *Correspondance*, no. 116 (letter to Félix Bracquemond, end 1886-early 1887), p. 143: 'si vous êtes curieux de voir sortis du four tous les petits produits de mes hautes folies, c'est prêt – 55 pièces en bon état – Vous allez jeter les grands cris devant ces monstruosités mais je suis convaincu que cela vous intéressera ...'
14. 'Ayez toujours devant vous les Persans, les CAMBODGIENS et un peu l'Egyptien. La grosse erreur c'est le Grec, si beau qu'il soit ...', *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*,

- ed. Annie Joly-Segalen, Paris 1950 (annotated reprint of original edition, ed. Victor Segalen, Paris 1918), no. xxxvii (October 1897), p. 113.
15. Paul Gauguin, 'Diverses choses', in Daniel Guérin (ed.), *Oviri: Ecrits d'un sauvage*, Paris 1974, p. 131.
 16. Douglas W. Druick and Peter Kort Zegers, exhib. cat. *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The studio of the south*, Chicago (Art Institute) & Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 2001-2, p. 89.
 17. 'la possibilité de donner à l'art de la céramique un élan nouveau par la création de nouvelles formes faites à la main...' Paul Gauguin, 'A propos de Sèvres et du dernier four', *Le Soir*, 25 April 1895, quoted in Guérin, *Oviri*, p. 136.
 18. Hirota, 'De la poterie', pp. 113-15, discusses their reciprocal importance, stressing similar tendencies more than direct influences. Edouard Papet, 'Une autre polychromie: Plâtres peintes, bronzes et sculptures céramiques de Jean-Josèph Carriès', 48/14 *La revue du Musée d'Orsay*, no. 18 (spring 2004), p. 78, concludes that 'l'émulation joua un rôle non négligeable au cours des ces années 1888-1891'.
 19. 'des FORMES de vase autres que des formes mécaniques connues'. Gauguin, 'Notes sur l'art à l'Exposition Universelle (suite)', *Le Moderniste illustré*, 11 July 1889, p. 91, quoted in Guérin, *Oviri*, p. 52.
 20. Merlhès, *Correspondance*, no. 99 (letter to Mette, first part of June 1886), p. 126.
 21. Edouard Papet, 'Jean Carriès: Portrait of the artist as a mask', *Breaking the mold*, pp. 142-53.
 22. Edward D. Powers, 'From Eternity to Here: Paul Gauguin and The World Made Flesh', *Oxford Art Journal* 25 (2002), no. 2, p. 96.
 23. For example, the marble *Head of John the Baptist* by Rodin (1887; Musée Rodin, Paris) and the plaster by Ringel (1880s; Private collection, Paris).
 24. The Galerie Durand-Ruel, Paris, 1893, listed no. 43 as *Femme noire*, but in the 1906 retrospective at the Salon d'Automne, the statuette (no. 227) was entitled *Vénus noire*.
 25. 'L'allégorie, le symbole, les attributs. En ce qui concerne les monuments de sculpture, en notre bonne ville de Paris, on patauge considérablement. L'écrivain ne saurait se passer de son bouquin et de sa plume d'oie. A l'inventeur d'un clysopompe il faut un clysoir. Si jamais on élève à Londres une statue à Wells, je réclame pour lui son rayon ardent.
 - Mais demain si l'on élève une statue à Dumont Santos, faudra-t-il sculpter un ballon. Par contre comment indiquera-t-on pour Pasteur la culture des microbes?' Gauguin, *Avant et après*, pp. 138-39. Alberto Santos-Dumont was the Brazilian pilot who first flew a dirigible powered by gasoline, 1898.
 26. Maurice Malingue (ed.), *Lettres de Gauguin à sa femme et à ses amis; recueillies et préfacées*, Paris 1946, LXXXI (letter to Emile Bernard, March 1889), p. 157.
 27. Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Gauguin's religious themes* (diss.), New York 1985, p. 178. Merete Bodelsen, 'Gauguin and the Marquesan God', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 57 (March 1961), p. 168, believes his first exoticism occurred in ceramics.
 28. Hirota, 'De la poterie', p. 116.
 29. For Gauguin's sexual metaphors for the creative process, see June Hargrove, 'Paul Gauguin and the Muse in the myth of the Artist as Other', in Virginie Schmitt (ed.), *L'Artiste et sa muse: Mythification du créateur et de son modèle XIX-XX siècles*, Paris-Rome 2006, pp. 117-39.
 30. Laure de Margerie and Edouard Papet, exhib. cat., *Facing the Other: Charles Cordier, ethnographic sculptor*, Paris (Musée d'Orsay) & New York (Dahe Museum of Art) 2004.
 31. Emmanuelle Héran, 'Art for the sake of the soul: Polychrome sculpture and literary symbolism', in exhib. cat. *The colour of sculpture*, p. 93, a perspective advanced by Théophile Gautier. Madeline, *Ultra-sauvage*, p. 145, notes that Gauguin's ceramic is the opposite of the traditional white Venuses of plaster or marble.
 32. Adrienne Childs, *The black exotic: Tradition and ethnography in nineteenth-century orientalist art* (diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2005), p. 105, concludes that in the visual arts 'the overarching theme of European narratives of the black woman in the nineteenth century was primitive sexuality.'
 33. Sue Taylor, 'Oviri: Gauguin's Savage Woman', *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 62 (1993), nos. 3-4, p. 200.
 34. Merlhès, *Correspondance*, no. 127 (letter to Mette, 20 June 1887), pp. 154-55, tells an anecdote about the sexual availability of the Martinique women. Gauguin's sexist and colonial prejudices have been discussed in a range of publications, including two essays in Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (eds.), *The expanding discourse*, New York 1992: Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Going Native: Paul Gauguin

and the invention of primitivist modernism', pp. 312-29; and Peter Brooks, 'Gauguin's Tahitian Body', pp. 330-45; and in T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus: Sexualized savages, primal fears, and primitive narratives in French*, Durham, NC, 1999.

35. Powers, 'From Eternity to Here', p. 97.

36. Douglas Cooper, *Paul Gauguin: 45 Lettres à Vincent, Théo et Jo van Gogh*, Lausanne 1983, no. 37 (letter to Vincent, 8 November 1889), further describes the symbolism. Amishai-Maisels, *Gauguin's religious themes*, p. 130, cites the idiom 's'en mordre les pouces' ('to bite one's thumbs'), which means to regret or to repent.

37. Ziva Amishai-Maisels, 'Gauguin: Dualisme iconographique et stylistique', in *Gauguin: Actes du colloque, Musée d'Orsay*, Paris 1991, p. 203, relating the style to his comments in a letter of February 1888 to his wife.

38. Malingue, *Lettres de Gauguin*, LXXXVII (letter to Bernard, September 1889), p. 167, offers a brief description of the relief with a sketch.

39. When Préault died in 1879, numerous articles recounted his career; a complete list of these appears in Sylvain Bellenger et al., *Auguste Préault sculpteur romantique*, Paris 1997, pp. 312-13.

40. Not cast until 1850, *Slaughter* entered the collection of the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Chartres, in 1870. Jean Clay, *Romanticism*, Paris 1980, pp. 172, 177.

41. Ernest Chesneau, 'Auguste Préault', *L'Art* 17 (1879), no. 2, p. 10.

42. The body is not so different from Gauguin's painting of a nude, *Woman sewing* (1880; Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen; W 39).

43. 'pour dire: je t'aime, il me faudrait casser toutes les dents.' Gauguin, *Avant et après*, p. 11.

44. Charles Chassé, 'Gauguin et le groupe de Pont-Aven: Documents inédits', Paris 1921, pp. 37-38.

45. Mark Cheetham, 'Mystical memories: Gauguin's neoplatonism and "abstraction" in late nineteenth-century French painting', *Art Journal* 46, no. 1 (spring 1987), p. 16, discusses the phenomenon of the closed eyes in the self-portraits.

46. Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński, 'Paul Gauguin's "Self-portrait with halo and snake": The artist as initiate and magus', *Art Journal* 46, no. 1 (spring 1987), p. 25, describes Meijer de Haan as a 'demonic seer' related to Milton's fallen angel in the painting paired with Gauguin's self-portrait.

Władysława Jaworska, 'Jacob Meyer de Haan', *Nederlands Kunsthistorisk Jaarboek*, no. 18 (1967), p. 210, discusses 'le philosophe-démon conçu par Gauguin'.

47. Koji Takahashi, 'The Superficial paradise: A study on Gauguin's sculpture and ceramics', in exhib. cat. *Paul Gauguin*, Tokyo (National Museum of Modern Art) 1987, p. 40, writes in this spirit when he states that the 'metamorphosis of materials ... is ... the myth of creation.'

48. Edouard Papet, exhib. cat. *Daumier: Les célébrités du juste milieu* (1832-1835), Paris (Musée d'Orsay) 2005, p. 12.

49. 'Daumier sculpte l'ironie.' Gauguin, *Avant et après*, p. 108.

50. Robert Welsh, 'Auberge de Marie Henry au Pouldu', *Revue de l'art* 86 (1989), p. 40, raises the possibility that the bird may be a hen, although it is usually described as a rooster. He notes the placement of De Haan's portrait of Marie nursing her infant Lea on the east wall. Michael Pantazzi, curator of European Art at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, noting that the bird's head seems to have suffered some damage, is sceptical about assigning a gender to it. The small head, with a modest crest, seems to me more in keeping with a hen.

51. 'éclatant succès'. Jules Claretie, *L'art et les artistes français contemporains*, 2nd series *Artistes vivants en janvier 1881*, Paris 1884, p. 386. Although the comparison is generic rather than specific, Gauguin could have studied *Eve* in Paris, either in the 1880 Salon or even in Falguière's studio in the rue d'Assas. Carl Jacobsen bought the marble from Hornemann's Auction, Paris, 28 August 1889 (Jens Peter Munk, *Catalogue of French sculpture [Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek]*, no. 1, Copenhagen 1993, p. 220).

52. Amishai-Maisels, *Gauguin's religious themes*, p. 154, identifies the Redon print; and Chassé, 'Gauguin et le groupe de Pont-Aven', p. 40, the plaster fragment from the 1889 pavilion.

53. Derek Paul, 'Willumsen and Gauguin in the 1890s', *Apollo* 111, no. 215 (January 1980), p. 41.

54. Wayne Andersen, *Gauguin's paradise lost*, New York 1974, p. 12, discusses the influence of Baudelaire, for whom 'all natural processes become tainted with the intimation of doom', on the *Femme noire*.

55. Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński, *Paul Gauguin in the context of symbolism* (diss.), New York 1978, pp. 174-75.

56. Andersen, *Gauguin's paradise lost*, p. 186, who first identified this meaning, kindly shared his further research on Gauguin's knowledge and use of this term. Gauguin, who had been a sailor in the 1860s, introduced this alternate signature in the winter of 1886-87. The pattern for its usage remains unclear, but it tends to occur with works that are either more personal or sexual.

57. Bengt Danielsson, *Gauguin in the South Seas*, New York 1966, pp. 188-89, describes the reproductions of Greek statues on Goupil's lawn, which Gauguin emulates to mock the lawyer's aristocratic pretensions. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. xxvi (November 1896), p. 95.

58. Chassé, 'Gauguin et le groupe de Pont-Aven', p. 48. *Caribbean woman with sunflowers*; Private collection; W 330 (Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin*, p. 315, fig. 82).

59. 'Pourquoi la sculpture est ennuyeuse'; 'un art de Caraïbes'. Charles Baudelaire, in 'Salon de 1846', *Écrits sur l'art*, Paris 1992, p. 228. See Wolfgang Drost, 'L'évolution du concept Baudelairien de la sculpture', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 124 (September 1994), pp. 39-52.

60. Malingue, *Lettres de Gauguin*, cx (letter to Bernard [August 1890]), p. 205, mentions the broken legs of a plaster version of the statue. Gauguin's inadequate technical training limited his options in sculpture, but this was also a choice. Charles Stuckey, 'L'énigme des pieds coupés', in *Gauguin: Actes*, p. 54, sees 'un malin plaisir' in suppressing the feet.

61. 'Gérôme me dit: "Voyez-vous la grande affaire en sculpture, c'est de bien calculer son armature." Qu'en dis-tu Rodin?' Gauguin, *Avant et après*, p. 216.

62. Stuckey, 'L'énigme', pp. 53, 55, sees Gauguin's surfaces and bases as a sign of modernity close to Rodin. He considers the possibility that his partial figures may relate to Rodin's fragments. The accidental condition of Rodin's *Torso*, modelled around 1877 in clay (Musée Rodin, Paris), which Gauguin might well have seen in the other's studio, makes it a tempting comparison.

63. 'Au Concours du fameux char qui devait orner l'arc de triomphe je vis la maquette de Falguière. C'était comme on dit crânement torché. Les chevaux avaient une souplesse de reins qui nous enchantait. Une fois le monument en place je ne vis plus que le ventre

de chevaux. Un sculpteur de renom, à qui j'en fis l'observation, me répondit: "Après tout, une figure placée là-haut doit être identique à ce personnage vivant placé là-haut!" Hum! hum!' Gauguin, *Avant et après*, p. 140. Catherine Chevillot, *La République et ses grands hommes*, Paris 1990, p. 53. Placed on the arch for Bastille Day 1882, the plaster was dismantled in 1886.

64. Paul, 'Willumsen and Gauguin', p. 39.

65. Ibid. p. 43. See also Anne-Birgitte Fonsmark, exhib. cat. *Jens Ferdinand Willumsen (1863-1958)*, Paris (Musée d'Orsay) 2006, *passim*.

66. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. xiii (April-May 1893), p. 70.

67. Druick and Zegers, *Van Gogh and Gauguin*, p. 62.

68. Philippe Peltier, 'Gauguin: Artist and ethnographer', in George M. Shackelford and Claire Frèches-Thory (eds.), exhib. cat. *Gauguin Tahiti, l'atelier des tropiques*, Paris (Grand Palais) & Boston (Museum of Fine Arts) 2003-4, p. 62, referring here to Gauguin's general use of the cylindrical shape.

69. 'La disposition générale tiendrait de l'insigne de Priape, Dieu des Jardins, emblème de la création, de la borne berceau et tombe du pauvre, enfin du tuyau de l'usine où se passe sa vie.' Maurice Dreyfous, *Dalou*, Paris 1903, p. 256, from the notebooks, 15 March 1898. He continues, 'Je crois avoir enfin trouvé le monument aux ouvriers que je cherche depuis 1889.'

70. Gauguin, *Avant et après*, pp. 140-41, 'Je dinais un jour avec Dalou chez ce sculpteur en renom, et il me dit: "Monsieur, la sculpture sera républicaine ou ne sera pas..." Enfoncé Déroulède.' Dalou, who attended the Petit Ecole with Aubé, met Gauguin after his return from England. Gauguin lived in the impasse Frémin upon his return from Denmark in 1885, when he saw Dalou again.

71. I am grateful to Tamara Préaud, Head of Collections Department, Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, for details on Dalou's models. The stoneware statue came in three sizes, 68 cm, 76 cm (which sold for 400 francs) and 1.67 m; a plaster version was slightly larger.

72. Gerald M. Ackerman, *Jean-Léon Gérôme*, New York 1986, pp. 156-58, details the Caillebotte affair. About Gauguin, see Ambroise Vollard, *Souvenirs d'un marchand de tableaux*, Paris 1936, p. 197.

73. 'exactitude archéologue'. Merlhès,

Correspondance, no. 78 (letter to Emile Schuffenecker, 24 May 1885), p. 105.

74. See June Hargrove, 'The role of the sculptor-painters and polychromy in the evolution of modernism', in exhib. cat. *The colour of sculpture*, pp. 103-14.

75. Hérain, 'Art for the sake of the soul', p. 95, citing the bejewelled tortoise of des Esseintes, protagonist of Huysmans's *A rebours* (1884).

76. Gauguin based his *Ancien culte mahorie*, 1893, on J. A. Moerenhout, *Voyage aux Îles du Grand Océan*, 2 vols., Paris 1837.

77. Paul Gauguin, *Ancien culte mahorie*, ed. René Huyghe, Paris 1951, p. 10.

78. Jehanne Teillet-Fisk, *Paradise reviewed, an interpretation of Gauguin's Polynesian symbolism*, Ann Arbor, MI, 1983, p. 54.

79. Anne Pinget, 'Premier séjour à Tahiti, 1891-1893: La sculpture', in exhib. cat. *Gauguin Tahiti*, p. 114.

80. Joëlle Ansieau, *Georges Lacombe: Catalogue raisonnée*, Paris 1998, p. 108.

81. The subject of Isis was popularized by the occult movements of the time, notably the theosophical text by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 1877.

82. Ansieau, *Georges Lacombe*, p. 109. In contrast, I see the carving style as close to that of polychrome wood reliefs by Gauguin, such as *Martinique* (1889; Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen; G 60).

83. Gray, *Sculpture and ceramics*, p. 65. Gauguin's conflation might have also been inspired by any number of fabled creatures, half human, half animal, like the Minotaur, or examples of Asian dieties. Hirota, 'De la poterie', p. 51, assessed Carriès and the *Oviri* in the context of the grotesque. Elizabeth C. Childs, 'Eden's other: Gauguin and the ethnographic grotesque', in Frances S. Connelly (ed.), *Modern art and the grotesque*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 175-92, points out how he sought to confuse and destabilize boundaries through the grotesque in his art.

84. Barbara Landy, 'The meaning of Gauguin's "Oviri" ceramic', *Burlington Magazine* 109, no. 769 (April 1967), pp. 242-46, and Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński, 'Paul Gauguin's Self-portraits and the *Oviri*: The image of the artist, Eve, and the fatal woman', *Art Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (spring 1979), p. 186.

85. Taylor, 'Oviri', p. 202, emphasizes the vaginal character of the orifice, surrounded by *Oviri*'s hair.

86. 'Une active, l'autre passive, ou l'âme et le corps; l'une spirituelle et cachée, l'autre matérielle et visible....' Gauguin, *Ancien culte mahorie*, p. 32. Gauguin lifted this concept straight from Moerenhout, *Voyage aux Îles*, vol. 1, p. 563. Suzanne Donahue, 'Exoticism and Androgyny', *Aurora* 1 (2000), p. 115, points out the fusion of male and female in the pattern on the *pareu* worn in the painting *Woman with mango* (1893; State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg; W 501).

87. E. S. Craighill Handy, *Polynesian Religion*, Honolulu 1927, p. 107. This source is among those cited by Carol S. Ivory, 'Art and aesthetics in the Marquesas Islands', in Eric Kjellgren, exhib. cat. *Adorning the world: Art of the Marquesas Islands*, New York (Metropolitan Museum of Art) 2005, p. 30, considering the relationship between *tiki* and male potency.

88. Peltier, 'Gauguin: Artist and Ethnographer', pp. 63-64.

89. Landy, 'The meaning of Gauguin's "Oviri"', p. 246. She is among the earliest to connect the sculpture of *Oviri* with the incident described in *Noa Noa*, where Gauguin's androgynous experience in the forest with a young Tahitian man marks his rebirth as a savage, purified of the taint of civilization.

90. Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński, *Paul Gauguin*, p. 382, associates *Oviri* with his personal misfortunes, among which Taylor, 'Oviri', pp. 203-4, stresses his syphilis.

91. Charles Morice, 'Paul Gauguin', *Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui*, no. 440 (December 1896-January 1897), p. 3, called her *Diane Chasserresse*, *Hecate* and *La Tueuse*.

92. For information on Carrier-Belleuse's group of *La chasse* for Sèvres, I am further indebted to Madame Préaud.

93. 'Sèvres, pour ne pas nommer, a tué la céramique. Personne n'en veut et quand un ambassadeur canaque arrive, v'là on lui colle un vase comme une belle-mère vous collerait sa fille pour s'en défaire. Tout le monde le sait mais on ne touche pas à Sèvres: c'est la gloire de la France.' Gauguin, 'Notes', in Guérin, *Oviri*, p. 50.

94. Gauguin, 'A propos de Sèvres ...', in Guérin, *Oviri*. According to Volland, *Souvenirs*, p. 175, Chaplet retaliated by exhibiting *Oviri* in his showcase.

95. Papet, 'Jean Carriès', p. 78, links the timing of this article to the posthumous Carriès

retrospective organized by the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, 1895.

96. See Catherine Chevallot, exhib. cat. *Emmanuel Frémiet, 1824-1910: La main et le multiple*, Dijon (Musée des Beaux-Arts) 1989, p. 104.

97. See exhib. cat. *La sculpture ethnographique: De la Vénus hottentote à la Tehura de Gauguin*, Paris (Musée d'Orsay) 1994.

98. Albert Elsen, exhib. cat. *Rodin*, New York (Museum of Modern Art) 1967, p. 96.

99. 'Rodin s'est donné beaucoup de mal pour rester réaliste dans une circonstance où il lui était impossible de l'être réellement, puisque, tout de même, il n'a pas connu Balzac; son oeuvre est belle malgré lui, malgré son parti pris réaliste, par l'expression massive du block, par une sorte d'affirmation symbolique de la force. Alors, à quoi bon s'exténuer à la recherche d'une vérité objective qui est hors de nos prises? Moi, j'aurais fait un géant, et, dans les deux mains du géant j'aurais mis deux petits monstres: Séraphitus et Séraphita.' Charles Morice, *Paul Gauguin*, Paris 1921, p. 42. Gauguin probably saw the *Balzac* in a photograph. Anne Pinget, 'Oviri 1894', in exhib. cat. *Gauguin Tahiti*, p. 194, is the first to question the legitimacy of Morice's account. She notes the similar outline of the two sculptures: 'Chez Rodin, l'esprit de Balzac prend la forme jaillissante d'un lingam.... Chez Gauguin, l'autoportrait de son esprit se fait Oviri.'

100. 'Et le monstre étreignant sa créature, féconde de sa semence des flancs généreux pour engendrer Seraphitus Seraphita.' The drawing (Musée du Louvre, Paris; R.F. 2884) was made for *Le Sourire*, his satirical newspaper, 19 August 1899.

101. 'Mais Rodin, sinon le plus grand sculpteur, au moins l'un des rares grands sculpteurs de notre époque, refusé par les gens de lettres! Cela m'effraye plus que la catastrophe de la Martinique.' Guérin, *Oviri*, p. 256, quoting from Paul Gauguin, *Raconteurs de rapin: Fac-simile du manuscrit de Paul Gauguin*, ed. Victor Merlhès, Taravao (Tahiti) 1994, pp. 32-33. The Society of Men of Letters, who commissioned the monument, refused the statue when it was finally presented at the 1898 Salon. The eruption of the volcano Mount Pelée in Martinique on 8 May 1902 killed 40,000 people.

102. 'Gauguin, c'est de la curiosité.' Charles Morice, 'Quelques opinions', *Mercure de France*, November 1903, p. 415.

103. Amélie Simier, 'Jean-Joseph Carriès: Sculpteur-potier au cœur du symbolisme', in exhib. cat. *Paris 1900 dans les collections du Petit Palais*, Brussels (Musée d'Ixelles) 2002, pp. 112-13, stating that the contract was sent on 22 March 1890. See also exhib. cat. *Jean-Joseph Carriès*, Paris (Galerie Patrice Bellanger) 1997, pp. 26, 86-91. A half-size plaster is in the Petit Palais, Paris.

104. 'la gueule monstrueuse que forment en se joignant les deux montants, eux-mêmes ornés de masques grimaçants, n'évoque-t-elle pas, comme aurait pu le souhaiter Wagner, le triomphe du bien et de la pureté sur les forces du mal.' Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, in exhib. cat. *La Sculpture française au XIXe siècle*, Paris (Grand Palais) 1986, p. 388.

105. Hirota, 'De la poterie', p. 115.

106. Jean-David Jumeau-Lafond, exhib. cat. *Les peintres de l'âme: Le symbolisme idéaliste en France*, Bruxelles (Musée d'Ixelles) 1999, p. 45.

107. 'Clouez visiblement une indécence sur votre porte: vous serez désormais débarrassé des honnêtes gens, les personnes les plus insupportables que Dieu ait créés.' Gauguin, *Avant et après*, p. 13.

108. Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, *Rodin: La porte de l'enfer*, Paris 2002, p. 11.

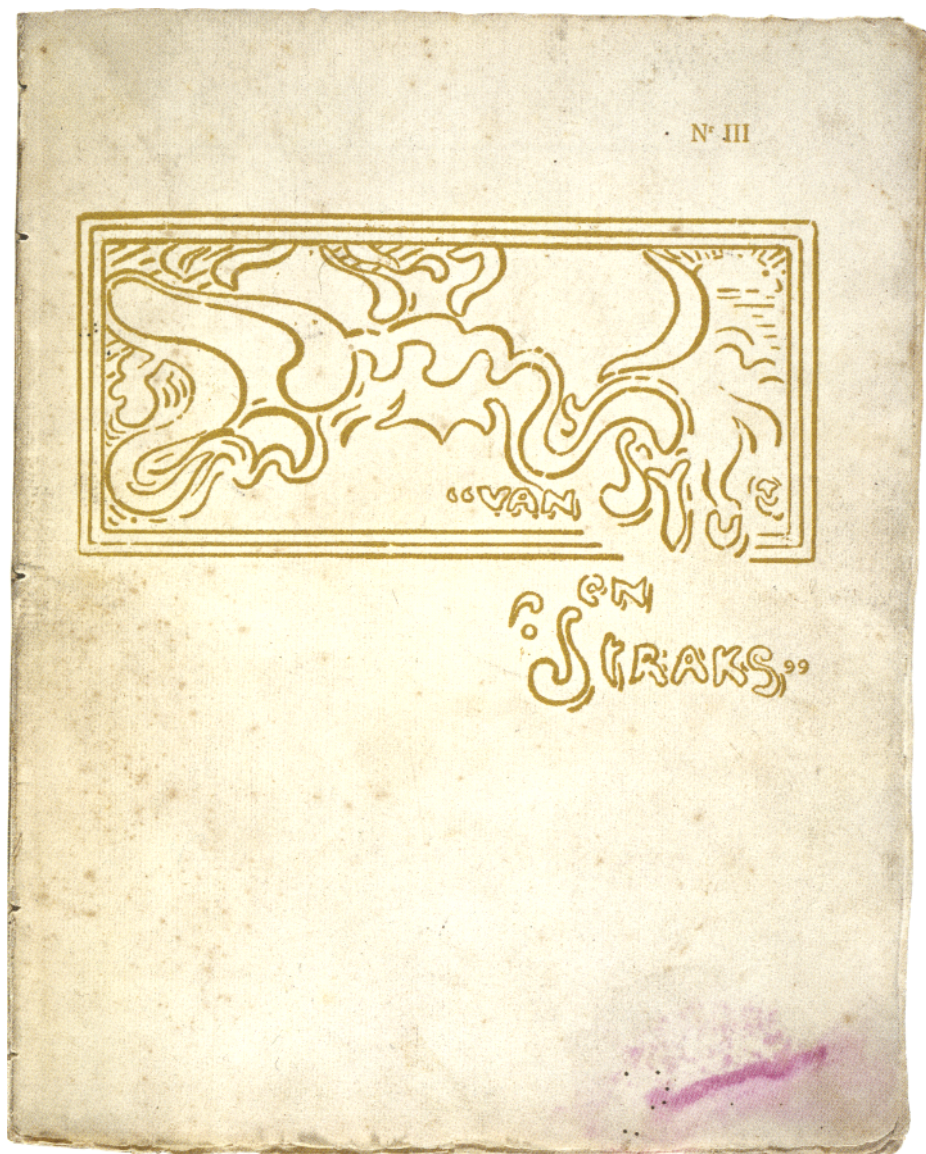
109. Elaine Paigels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, New York 1988, analyzes the evolution of the biblical story in European history.

110. Le Normand-Romain, *Rodin*, p. 10, fig. 6, an early sketch showing the placement of Adam and Eve; the life-size *Eve*, p. 41, was exhibited without a pedestal at the 1899 Salon.

111. Gauguin, *Avant et après*, p. 81.

112. Le Normand-Romain, *Rodin*, pp. 44-45, shows that both were exhibited in the 1880s.

113. Their circles overlapped, notably through Aubé and Dalou, so Gauguin may have been privy to the other's ideas in ways that are impossible to document now. Frederick Grunfeld, *Rodin: A biography*, New York 1987, p. 296, claims that Rodin knew Gauguin from the symbolist evenings at the Café Voltaire in the late 1880s and Mallarmé's Tuesday dinners in 1894-95.



1. Cover of the Van Gogh issue of *Van Nu & Straks* (new series, no. III, August 1893), with vignette and lettering by Van de Velde

**The artist's correspondence
in late nineteenth-century
publications on art:
The letters of Vincent van
Gogh in the Belgian periodical
*Van Nu & Straks***

Joan E. Greer

Introduction

In 1893, three years after the death of Vincent van Gogh, the newly launched Flemish periodical *Van Nu & Straks* (Of Now and Tomorrow), published a 37-page commemorative issue of excerpts from Van Gogh's letters – one of the very earliest publications of the letters, and their only substantial publication in the Dutch language before 1905.¹ These writings present Van Gogh as one dedicated to creating a new art of relevance to modern viewers, an art that would communicate through an accessible subject matter, that would focus on nature and the rural worker, and that would do so directly, through the formal means of expressive lines and colour. It would be a personal art in which the artist's temperament was clearly evident.

Van Nu & Straks, the Antwerp-based Art Nouveau journal in which the letters appeared, was published in two series between 1893 and 1901. A Dutch language periodical ‘without aesthetic dogma’, it had close ties to the Flemish movement but also looked to international tendencies, including those found within the Arts and Crafts movement’s principles of book design.² The organizers of *Van Nu & Straks*, like Van Gogh, believed that a new modern art should arise – and that it should be an art that would serve the community.³ This, however, was not to be at the expense of the individuality of the artist. As the writer and acknowledged intellectual leader of the periodical, August Vermeylen (1872-1945), later wrote, they ‘attempted to make a harmonious reconciliation of individuality with a feeling of community’.⁴

Van Gogh’s correspondence published in *Van Nu & Straks*, the subject of the present enquiry, will be examined in order to investigate the image of the artist



2. Van Gogh: Landscape drawing reproduced in *Van Nu & Straks* (August 1893), frontispiece; F 1468 JH 1498

that emerges, focusing on how it functioned vis-à-vis the periodical's early aims and within the larger arena of the growing body of publications by and about artists. Particular attention will be paid to the writings of the artist/designer Henry van de Velde (1863-1957), the periodical's artistic director, and of the writer August Vermeylen,⁵ to explore how their ideas, in turn, related to radical cultural theory associated with contemporary anarchist writings.

The Van Gogh issue of *Van Nu & Straks* (the third issue of the new periodical) appeared in August 1893. It consists of excerpts from thirteen letters by Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo, nine of which were in Dutch (written from The Hague, Nuenen and Antwerp) and four in French (from Arles and Saint-Rémy).⁶ Three reproductions of landscape drawings by Van Gogh (ills. 2, 4, 5), a portrait of Van Gogh (ill. 6) by the English painter Horace Mann Livens (1862-1936),⁷ and vignettes (ills. 7, 8, 9) by the Dutch artists Johan Thorn Prikker (1868-1932), Jan Toorop (1858-1928) and Richard Roland Holst (1868-1938) accompany the text. The cover is Van de Velde's highly abstract image of water with the words 'Van Nu & Straks' overflowing the boundaries of the image (ill. 1).⁸

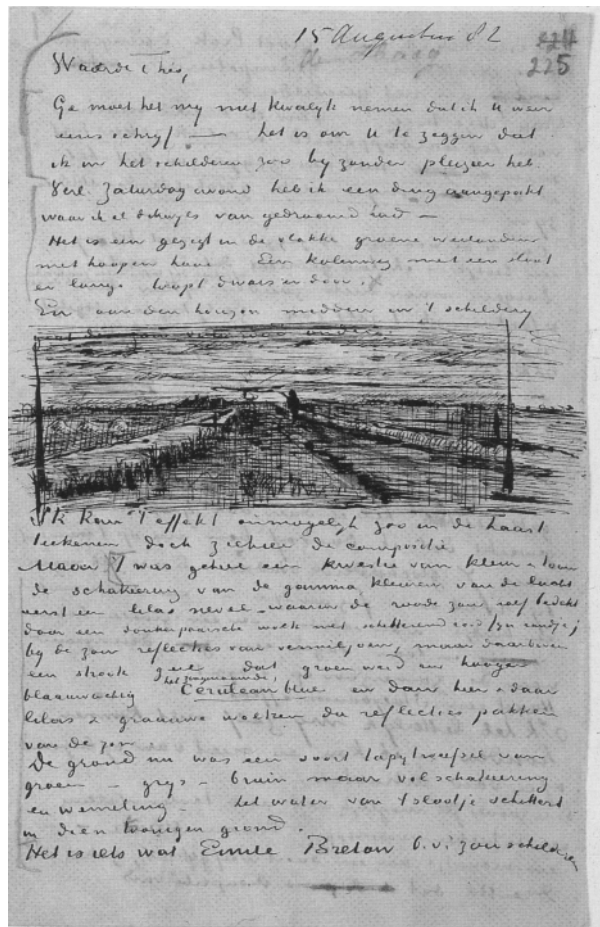
A two-page introduction, written by Henry van de Velde,⁹ stated that the purpose of the issue was to 'erect a monument to the glorification of Van Gogh'.¹⁰ As I have discussed elsewhere in relation to the Dutch vignettes in this issue,¹¹ connections *Van Nu & Straks* had to the Flemish movement, as well as the financial imperative of broadening the subscription base, led to the fostering of cultural ties with the Netherlands;¹² it was appropriate, therefore, that this issue should focus on Van Gogh's letters in Dutch, written prior to his French period, and that it was Dutch artists who provided the vignettes.¹³ Van de Velde paid tribute in his introduction to two earlier publications of the artist's correspondence: the small catalogue of the Amsterdam Panorama exhibition of Van Gogh's works organized by Richard Roland Holst in December 1892,¹⁴ which contained brief excerpts of the correspondence from the French period; and Emile Bernard's serialized publication in *Mercure de France*, beginning in April 1893, of Van Gogh's letters, also from his years in France.¹⁵ Van de Velde concluded the introduction by stating that it was with painful emotion that they at *Van Nu & Straks* remembered 'that black hour that did away with such an extraordinary genius', and that they feared that Van Gogh might well be the last of a kind.¹⁶

The publication of this issue was coming at a time when the mythologizing discourses surrounding Van Gogh were in their infancy.¹⁷ The image, at this point, was most prominently represented in the writings of the Frenchmen Octave Mirbeau (1848-1917), Albert Aurier (1865-1892) and Emile Bernard (1868-1941) – writings that were familiar to those in avant-garde Dutch and Belgian cultural circles. Indeed, the essays by Mirbeau and Aurier had been on display at the Panorama exhibition referred to by Van de Velde in his introduction. The famous description of Van Gogh by Aurier is representative of the mad artist-hero construct

beginning to take shape: 'He is one of the exalted, an enemy of bourgeois sobriety and meticulous accuracy, a sort of drunken giant ... a terrible, mad genius, often sublime, at times grotesque, always verging on the pathological.'¹⁸

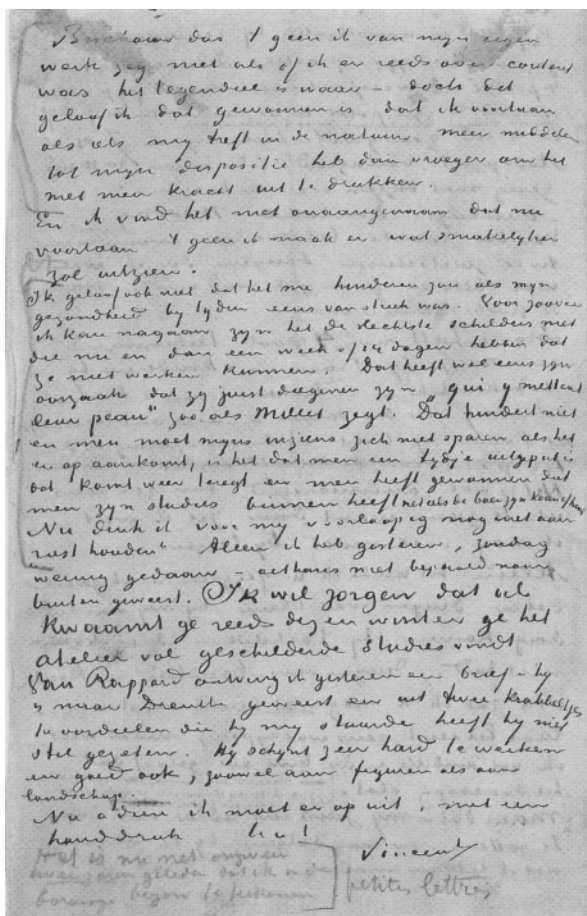
While the image of Van Gogh found within the pages of *Van Nu & Straks*, shaped by the artist's own words, does not directly contradict Aurier's passionate description, it does produce a more sober, down-to-earth portrait that, as will be seen, is at once more in line with that found in naturalist artists' biographies but also, more importantly, directly related to prominent artistic discourses in Belgium that argued for the artist to play a strong, if not revolutionary, role as a social and cultural leader.

3. Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo of 15 August 1882 [258/255], showing editorial markings for publication in *Van Nu & Straks*, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam



The letters

The task of the editorial selection process fell primarily to Henry van de Velde, who was assisted by August Vermeylen.¹⁹ It is mentioned briefly in Van de Velde's correspondence with Theo van Gogh's widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, from whom he borrowed the letters and drawings, that the focus was to be on letters 'of an artistic interest' similar to those that Roland Holst had included in his catalogue, and that nothing would be printed that would have the potential to cause pain to the family.²⁰ Indeed, once the proofs were ready for publication, Van de Velde sent them to Jo van Gogh-Bonger for approval.²¹



It seems highly likely that there were discussions between Jo van Gogh-Bonger and the organizers of *Van Nu & Straks* concerning the periodical's specific focus on Van Gogh's period in the Low Countries, although I have been unable to locate existing records of this. It is clear, however, that Jo van Gogh-Bonger must have been apprised of this focus as, unlike the letters published by Roland Holst, which were all from France, in the texts sent by Jo van Gogh-Bonger, as stated earlier, nine of the thirteen letters were from the Low Countries.

It should be underlined that, while the part Jo van Gogh-Bonger played (and continued to play) in determining which letters were reproduced was significant, the role of Van de Velde and Vermeylen was nonetheless considerable, as they determined precisely which passages from the letters to include. While there is no correspondence of the period documenting discussions between these two men concerning Van Gogh and the importance they assigned to him vis-à-vis modern art, Vermeylen would later chronicle his visit with Van de Velde in Kalmthout on 19 June 1893, where together in the garden they discussed the organizational details of the Van Gogh issue. Looking back on this visit, and claiming (incorrectly) that they had been the first to publish the correspondence, Vermeylen wrote of the considerable emotion these 'tragic and admirably self-assured' letters caused the two men.²² According to Vermeylen, he and Van de Velde had 'deciphered the sometimes feverish scribblings of a man who had given all his life blood for the ideal, who, with evangelical love, had immersed himself in the world of the humble and of the creatures of nature in order to create an art that was completely natural and profoundly human.' Vermeylen concluded that Van Gogh had seemed to them like a saint 'in the religion of art and of humanity'.²³ Although this was not written at the time, the religiosity of tone and especially the focus on Van Gogh's dedication to the humble and to nature, are nonetheless representative of Vermeylen's and, to a great extent, Van de Velde's, theoretical ideas of the period, as will be seen when discussing their writings on art. Vermeylen's discussion, in any case, serves as the only extant record of the meeting that took place between these two men to choose passages of the letters to reproduce. Unfortunately, no direct mention is made of the difficult editorial procedure that must have ensued.

None of the letters in *Van Nu & Straks* were reproduced in their entirety – not surprising given that some of the originals are ten to twelve pages in length.²⁴ Marks of the editorial selection process are still evident in the original letters in which the fragments of text chosen for publication have been bracketed off (ill. 3).²⁵ Not only were choices made concerning what passages to include, but the excerpts were at times altered by adding and substituting words and phrases as well as changing their relative positions within the text. The kinds of material omitted generally fall within three broad categories: comments referring, at times obliquely, to personal problems Van Gogh had with his family or others; references to practical and financial details concerning purchasing painting supplies



4. Van Gogh: Landscape drawing reproduced in *Van Nu & Straks* (August 1893),
p. 27; F 1524 JH 1749

and sending finished work to Theo; and discussions of further examples of Van Gogh's or other artists' works. In the latter category, there does not seem to have been a clear, consistent rationale for omitting some artists and including others, with the exception of those working in a naturalist style, especially French realists and Dutch Hague School artists, in which case there seems to have been every effort made to include as many references as possible.

As the present article investigates the specific image of Van Gogh found here, as opposed to examining the writings for what they reveal about the artist himself,²⁶ it will be the information provided in the periodical, even if mistaken or incomplete, that will be of chief concern (with corrections or additions noted either in the text or endnotes). For the sake of convenience and coherence, the texts will generally be referred to as 'letters' rather than 'fragments of letters'.



5. Van Gogh: Landscape drawing reproduced in *Van Nu & Straks* (August 1893), p. 13; F 1548 JH 1726

Letters from Holland and Belgium

Van Gogh's letters in *Van Nu & Straks* from the Netherlands – five from The Hague and two from Nuenen – comprise more than two-thirds of the correspondence in this issue. The first, written from The Hague on 15 August 1882 (ill. 3), marks the point at which Van Gogh began painting.²⁷ Prefaced with the words, 'It is now just about *two years* since I began to draw in the Borinage,' it situates the initial phase of Van Gogh's artistic activity in Belgium. The text, focusing on two of Van Gogh's paintings, a meadow with haystacks and a dune landscape, gives a brief overview of Van Gogh's working methods.²⁸ Reference is made to the fact that painting could lead to periods of ill health as it required such hard, exhausting labour, and, quoting Jean-François Millet (1814-1875), who stated that painters are those 'who put their life into it',²⁹ Van Gogh compares the painter's task to that of the farm worker.³⁰

The importance of Theo van Gogh begins to emerge in the second letter,³¹ and the naturalist approach to subject matter is more fully developed.³² Van Gogh's own work described in this letter, a modest genre subject, is a study of a cradle. The Hague School artist Anton Mauve (1838-1888) is mentioned, which, like the reference to the dune landscape, begins to underline the specifically Dutch milieu in which Van Gogh was working.

In the third letter,³³ the importance of the simple contour line is raised, and the artist's special relationship to nature is reiterated.³⁴ Van Gogh states that it is wrong for the artist to strive consciously for commercial success and ends with a brief description of himself as 'nothing more than a friend of nature, of study, of work, – and also, above all, of humanity'.³⁵

This is followed by two letters, both containing vivid pictorial descriptions. The first,³⁶ reminiscent of numerous Hague School paintings dealing with the life and work of the fisherman, centres on the arrival of a fishing boat in Scheveningen – an incident, Van Gogh reported, that resulted in about ten different sketches. And the second, in what is the final letter from The Hague,³⁷ describes a leaf-strewn beech forest he is painting. Squeezing 'roots and stems' directly from the paint tube, in what he notes is an unconventional language or 'shorthand',³⁸ Van Gogh relates his methods to those of Mauve, whom he, in turn, compares to Jacob Maris (1837-1899), Millet and Jules Dupré (1811-1889). The letter ends by once again bringing questions of health in direct relation to the activity of painting, but, in contrast to his earlier discussion, Van Gogh now speaks of the cathartic nature of art-making.³⁹

These writings are followed by two letters written in 1885 from Nuenen in the southern Dutch province of Brabant. The first,⁴⁰ six pages in length, is the longest and, arguably, the weightiest in terms of content relevant to *Van Nu & Straks*'s aims. It begins with a brief section on the art market and on the importance of

the individual artist within exhibiting practices and within the art itself. Van Gogh asserts that he is becoming absorbed by the peasant life that he is painting and, increasingly, living, and writes about establishing a new, modern art that would find subject matter in the working classes and in the theme of labour. He points to Millet, Léon-Augustin Lhermitte (1844-1925) and Jozef Israëls (1824-1911) as examples of those who have truly represented 'work', and refers to the painting on this theme on which he himself is currently engaged – a woman pulling a carrot from the snowy ground. Within the broad theme of work, Van Gogh makes clear that the agricultural labourer is most relevant.

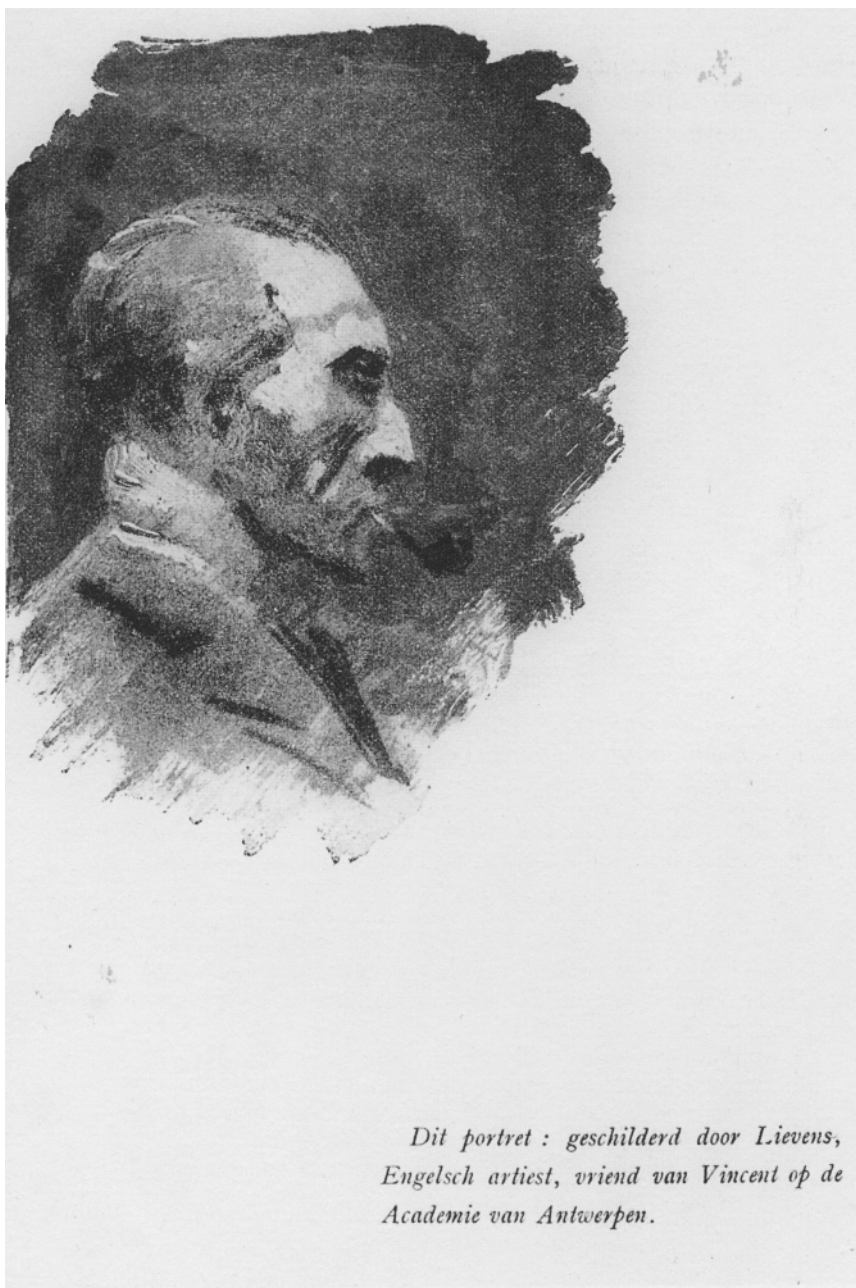
In this letter, Van Gogh also calls for an abandonment of academic technique in favour of an expressive style revealing the hand and, more importantly, the feelings of the artist. Elaborating on his rejection of academic art, he writes that he admires Michelangelo, as well as Millet, Lhermitte and Honoré Daumier (1808-1879), for the very distortions found in their figures.

In the second letter from Nuenen,⁴¹ Van Gogh begins by asserting that an artist should not worry about what the majority thinks of his work and that it is enough if only a few understand it. He then turns to Dutch art he has recently viewed in Amsterdam,⁴² commenting on the ability of artists like Rembrandt and Frans Hals to capture their subject quickly and with minimal means, and relating this technique to that of recent artists such as Camille Corot (1796-1875), Millet, Ernest Meissonnier (1815-1891) and Israëls. The letter ends with a more extensive discussion of Israëls and a reference to Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863), who is lauded for the passion invested in his art.⁴³

This is followed by two brief letters both, according to the headings, from Antwerp.⁴⁴ In the first, Van Gogh paints a colourful textual picture of the bustle and confusion he finds along Antwerp's quays and, in the second, musing on Veronese's *Marriage at Cana*, comments on the expressive nature of colour within painting. Van Gogh's most strongly voiced feelings concerning his ties with Belgium, however, are not found here but rather, as will be seen, in a letter from France.

Letters from France

With the final four letters in the series the language shifts from Dutch to French, the location from the Low Countries to France. The first⁴⁵ is a description of Van Gogh's now famous painting of his bedroom in Arles, focusing on colour as its single most significant component. This is followed by the shortest letter,⁴⁶ only two sentences in length, written from Saint-Rémy: 'When you told me Maus had seen my paintings it made me think a lot about the Belgian painters of today. Then memories came to me, like an avalanche, and I tried to remember that whole school of modern Flemish artists, until I became homesick, like a Swiss.'⁴⁷



6. Horace Mann Livens: Portrait of Van Gogh reproduced in *Van Nu & Straks* (August 1893), facing p. 2

Here, Van Gogh indicates himself to be sympathetically disposed toward modern Flemish artists and sufficiently emotionally connected to Belgium to feel homesickness for it. Furthermore, the mention of Octave Maus, the secretary of the Belgian avant-garde group Les XX,⁴⁸ reminds the reader of the early reception and appreciation of Van Gogh within Belgium, something to which *Van Nu & Straks* with this commemorative issue was contributing.⁴⁹



Sinds wij beschikten over de keus van het zwartvullen dezer periodieke bladen, & over dit werktuig — dat wij schoon eischen — onzer willen, bepaalde zich in zoo'n vorm tot dan toe onbestemd, die wensche eens een gedenkteeken oprichten ter verheerlijking van Vincent van Gogh.

Dat het duurzaam ware, zoo wilde het een gevoel dat zich uiteenlegt: ijdelheid van den werkman die zich toch wil overleven in zijn werk, — hoogmoed, dat 't er op aankomen zou zoo 'n daad *nú juist* volbracht te hebben, & om eenige klaarziendheid die zou veredeld. Het aarzelen om bouwstoffen van problematische waarde te gebruiken die wijzelf & de gelijkaardige willen mochten vergaren, duurde nog, als ons niet de mijn veropenbaard geworden waar Vincent volzinnen stapelde, hecht als steenen.

De catalogus der onlangsche tentoonstelling te Amsterdam, door vrienden ingericht zoozeer als wij bezorgd hem te eeren, bracht den schat aan 't licht, — &, ontroerd, gingen wij aan Mevrouw W^{me} Theo van Gogh, die hem met piëteit bewaarde, de toelating vragen om er in te mogen putten.

Intusschen was de « *Mercure de France* », aan wie de schilder Bernard zijn geestdriftige bewondering overleverde, ons vóorgegaan met de uitgave der brieven uit het laatste tijdperk van Vincent's leven, — het in Frankrijk geleefde. Zij trokken hevig de aandacht ginds.

Niets meer dan billijk, & dat de fastueus-grootste bekroning werd

7. Vignette by Thorn Prikker in the Van Gogh issue of *Van Nu & Straks* (August 1893), p. 1

This short entry is followed by the penultimate text in the series, a letter that, although identified in *Van Nu & Straks* as having been written from Arles in 1888, was in fact written from Saint-Rémy the following year and reveals the artist in a highly anxious state.⁵⁰ Van Gogh despairs that he does not have the temperament needed to succeed as an artist and describes works he would like to make if he had the strength – portraits of holy men and women.⁵¹

Returning to a much less agitated tone, the last letter,⁵² written from Arles, begins with Van Gogh lamenting the paucity of peasant paintings – ‘paintings in clogs’ as he refers to them⁵³ – in the Parisian art world. He asserts that he has more in common with Delacroix than with the impressionists and explains that he now uses colour increasingly arbitrarily, in order to express himself strongly. This he illustrates with an example – another description of a canvas he would like to paint but that, at this point, exists only in his mind:⁵⁴ the portrait of an artist-friend.⁵⁵ He writes ‘Behind the artist’s head I [will] ... paint eternity. I [will] make a simple background of the richest, deepest blue I can concoct ...’⁵⁶ It is the description of an ideal visionary artist. Van Gogh had taken a similar approach, he notes, in a peasant portrait he had done,⁵⁷ and acknowledges, seemingly with resignation, that the exaggerations found in the work would likely be dismissed as mere caricature. He explains these distortions, invoking Zola’s representations of peasants in *La terre* and *Germinal*, the knowledge of which, he writes, has become embedded within one’s understanding of these people and thus affects representations of them. Van Gogh also muses briefly in this letter on the financial burdens shouldered by the artist, stating that painting should be paid for by society.⁵⁸ The final section, however, and thus the last words of this issue of *Van Nu & Straks*, is on a more positive note. Van Gogh writes that one can survive on only a piece of bread, even while working hard the whole day, but, in spite of hardships, still be in a position ‘to feel clearly the stars and the infinite above’ and concludes that ‘Life is then, after all, almost enchanted!’⁵⁹

Writings on artists

The publication of Van Gogh’s correspondence in *Van Nu & Straks* occurred at a time when there was a growing body of writings by and about artists being published. These included early art histories of various periods, catalogues raisonnés, historical biographical monographs and fictional accounts of artists. They also included a growing number of periodicals, many of which, like *Van Nu & Straks*, were taking part in the widespread movement toward improving the quality of printing and book design spearheaded by the Arts and Crafts movement in England. Journals such as *The Hobby Horse*, *The Studio*, *L’Art décorative*, *Dekorative Kunst*, *Jugend* and *Ver Sacrum* are good examples. These periodicals brought

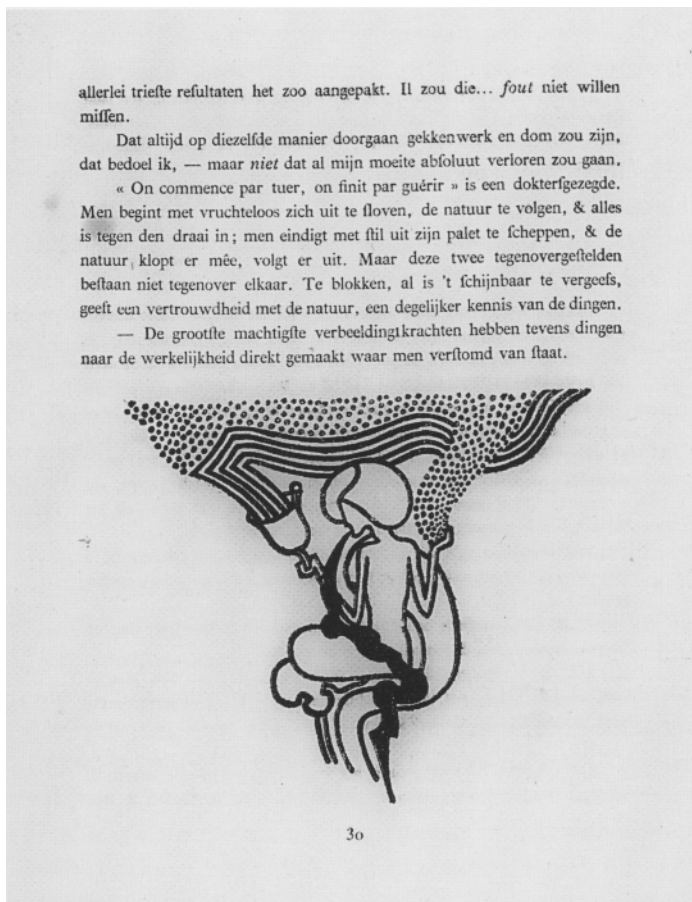
ideas about various art forms together in an accessible form that held the potential for wide dissemination; moreover, the publications themselves were increasingly being considered a new, relevant art form. Within Belgium itself, the three most prominent journals dealing with cultural production were *La Jeune Belgique*, *La Wallonie* and *L'Art moderne*. While there was a great deal of publishing activity taking place surrounding art and the artist, publications of artists' correspondence, such as the Van Gogh issue of *Van Nu & Straks*, were still relatively rare, although this, too, was beginning to change. Bernard's publication of Van Gogh's letters in *Mercur de France*, for example, has already been mentioned in this respect and, in relation to Dutch-language periodicals, Johan Thorn Prikker's letters to Henri Borel would appear in 1895 and 1896 in three issues of Lodewijk van Deyssel's and Albert Verwey's newly founded journal *Het Tweemaandelijksch Tijdschrift*, before being published in one volume in 1897.⁶⁰

Within the larger category of publications on artists, biographical monographs of recently deceased French landscape and 'nature' painters particularly proliferated and were well known both within and outside of France.⁶¹ Alfred Sensier's widely read biographies of Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867) and especially that of Van Gogh's hero and role model, Millet, are good examples of this genre that resonate strongly with Van Gogh's own writings.⁶² These artists are defined in terms of their individuality and set apart through their rejection of conventional (academic) art, the lack of understanding shown toward them by mainstream publics and by their close relationship to nature and humble backgrounds and lifestyles.⁶³

Publications of artists' correspondence, it is clear, do not belong to the same category of writing as artists' biographies. In the former category, the artist's image is achieved solely through the use of the artist's own words. It is, therefore, a self-image. This increases the focus on the artist and on artistic temperament,⁶⁴ which results in a heightened sense of directness and authenticity. The complexities of such writings, however, should not be underestimated. They are not simple or transparent historical documents but are first constituted by the artist, whose awareness of possible future publication (in part or whole) of the correspondence would, potentially, have had an effect on the form and/or content of the letters. In the case of Van Gogh, the artist can hardly have been unaffected by his own in-depth knowledge of publications, past and present, in both fiction and non-fiction (including recent biographies) about artists.⁶⁵ Second, as noted earlier, the correspondence was mediated by the editorial hand and contextual framing of the publication in which it appeared.

In spite of the differences between artists' correspondence and the biographical mode of writing, the *topoi* found within them could, as has been seen, overlap significantly. In respect to the discussion at hand, such points in common may seem incongruous when considered in the light of the very real and numerous stylistic and contextual differences between French naturalist artists and Van Gogh.

And yet, when the radical political ideologies and populist aims associated with naturalist artists are taken into consideration, especially concerning the revolutionary period around 1848, one finds a coherence – both with Van Gogh's own writings and with the very early reception of his work, which focused on him as a radical, socially orientated artist,⁶⁶ on the one hand, and with early aims found within the pages of *Van Nu & Straks* on the other. This latter point, and how the image of the artist and of the artist's task that emerged in the Van Gogh issue functioned vis-à-vis the early editorial focus of this periodical, particularly as it was articulated by Van de Velde and Vermeulen, warrants closer attention.



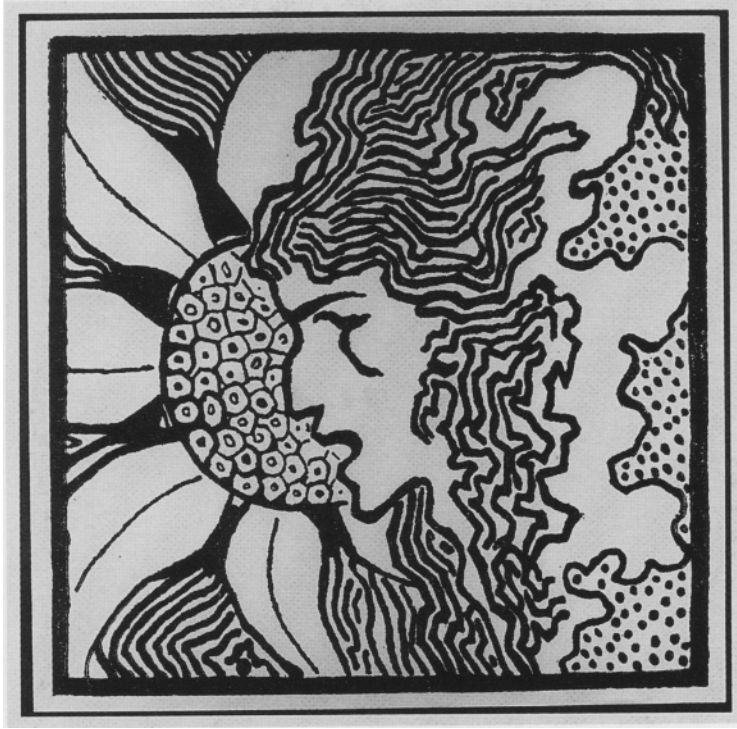
8. Vignette by Toorop in the Van Gogh issue of *Van Nu & Straks* (August 1893), p. 30

Van Nu & Straks, Henry van de Velde, August Vermeylen and anarchist theory

Van Gogh's identification of the theme of the worker as an important modern subject reinforced contemporary Belgian art theory in relation to the tendency toward a socially engaged art that would be relevant to the working classes. These ideas featured strongly in the pages of *Van Nu & Straks* but also elsewhere, finding a clear foundation in the theory associated with Les XX.⁶⁷ Henry van de Velde, who had been an active member of Les XX from 1888 until its demise in April 1893,⁶⁸ shared Van Gogh's interest in the peasant and had begun to use the subject in his own art by the early 1890s, also writing and lecturing on the importance of subject matter of this kind. In July 1892, for example, he delivered a lecture entitled 'The Peasant in Painting' at an exhibition of the Les XX held at the Kunstkring in The Hague.⁶⁹ Delivered previously in both Antwerp and Brussels,⁷⁰ and reviewed by Richard Roland Holst the following month in the Belgian periodical *L'Art moderne*, it was a lecture in which Van de Velde spoke of the threat industrialization posed to the rural landscape and way of life⁷¹ and lauded the use of the subject of peasants in recent art, alluding to agricultural labourers being done by artists like Camille Pissarro, in particular.⁷²

It is within the pages of *Van Nu & Straks* itself, however, that Van de Velde's theoretical ideas concerning a socially engaged art are particularly well outlined.⁷³ In an article he wrote in the second issue, he calls for an art that will serve the community, using the British Arts and Crafts designer Walter Crane (1845-1915) as the example of one who could lead the way. This art, he writes, should be an applied art with a theoretical basis in the writings of Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921). Adopting the revolutionary rhetoric of anarchism, he writes that once present-day structures are overthrown and a society that ensures the rights and well-being of all individuals has been achieved, artists will no longer have to worry about market concerns. By selecting Crane as a model of leadership for this new art, Van de Velde was choosing a figure of particular significance to *Van Nu & Straks*, as he was best known for his book design and his socially orientated theory on the applied arts.⁷⁴

In the same issue of *Van Nu & Straks* August Vermeylen, likewise, expressed his ideas about the development of a new, socially engaged art.⁷⁵ He wrote about his ideas in a letter to Emmanuel de Born in the following terms: '... one must point the way toward a synthetic, monumental, "religious" community art. That programme is closely tied to anarchy, and if I had to explain that in a series of lectures, I'd begin with a letter about "La Conquête du Pain" by Kropotkin.'⁷⁶ In March 1894 Vermeylen indeed delivered a lecture to the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring on the subject of *Gemeenschapskunst* (Community Art).⁷⁷ The talk, entitled 'Art in Free Society', was published as a two-part article in the sixth and seventh issues of *Van Nu & Straks* and again in the Dutch periodical *Architectura*.⁷⁸



9. Vignette by Roland Holst in the Van Gogh issue of *Van Nu & Straks* (August 1893), tailpiece

The work by Kropotkin invoked by both Vermeylen and Van de Velde, *La conquête du pain*, set forth a radical cultural theory that was complex and had far-reaching effects on socially orientated cultural groups in Belgium.⁷⁹ Already clearly evident as a theoretical touchstone in the writings of Vermeylen and Van de Velde within the early issues of *Van Nu & Straks*, Kropotkin's work would continue to inform the content of the periodical as the decade proceeded.⁸⁰ The apparent contradiction found within the Van Gogh issue of celebrating the individual artist, on the one hand, while arguing for an art of and for the people with a strong basis in co-operation, on the other, gains coherence in light of anarchist theory. So, too, does the sub-theme of the problematic position held by the artist vis-à-vis the commercial art market. The anarchist and geographer Elisée Reclus (1830-1905),⁸¹ already known in Belgium but soon to become an important leader in intellectual circles there, indicates in his 1892 preface to Kropotkin's book that

the anarchist revolution was already well underway. In terms that overlap with artistic notions found within *Van Nu & Straks*, he states that the anarchist society 'manifests itself wherever free thinking defies the letter of dogma, wherever the genius of the seeker ignores the established formulae'⁸² He indicates that this revolution is 'about the repossession of the collective wealth accumulated by the work of all people' and that one of the consequences will be that 'the artist will no longer prostitute his ideal of beauty to boil the pot'.⁸³

The most obvious theoretical tie between Kropotkin's work and Van Gogh's own words in this issue of *Van Nu & Straks*, and one that also finds resonance in relation to Van de Velde's writings on the peasant in art and, indeed, to Sennier's biographical writings as well, concerns the artist in relation to nature and rural work: 'The best canvases of modern artists are those that represent nature, villages, valleys, the sea with its dangers, the mountain with its splendours. But how can the painter express the poetry of work in the fields if he has only contemplated it, imagined it, if he has never delighted in it himself? ...'⁸⁴

There are a number of other subjects of particular relevance to *Van Nu & Straks* found within *La conquête du pain*. These include the general call to intellectuals to participate in manual labour; the rejection of present-day paintings on canvas – a form of art seen as both inaccessible and irrelevant to the people; and, perhaps most notable in relation to the periodical's emphasis on book art, the importance of printing and book design.⁸⁵

Conclusion

The way in which Van Gogh's correspondence functioned here, then, may be summarized as follows. First, it focuses on Van Gogh as a Dutch artist and underlines the significance of Belgium in his development and early reception. Second, it represents both an end and a beginning vis-à-vis the new art being envisioned by those involved with *Van Nu & Straks*. The end of an art for art's sake intended for the private market – a form of art that had had tragic consequences in the case of Van Gogh. And a promising beginning found within the correspondence itself, in that it contained the 'seeds' for an art of the future – an art that would represent the working rural poor and their environments. An art that would find its basis in nature, but speak directly and expressively through a non-descriptive, distorted formal language or visual 'shorthand'. The ideas complement those found in the writings of Van de Velde, Vermeylen and, in a broader sense, those of Kropotkin. It is only when placed within the print medium provided by this periodical, however, that the artist's correspondence serves to endorse and disseminate the radical cultural theory being promoted within *Van Nu & Straks*, placing Van Gogh's words in the context of the new, engaged form of art being heralded here.

NOTES

For their input and assistance at various stages of this project, I would like to thank prof em. Carel Blotkamp of the Free University of Amsterdam and the staff of the Van Gogh Museum, particularly Sjraar van Heugten, Louis van Tilborgh, Chris Stolwijk, Monique Hagemans, Fieke Pabst and Anita Vriend. I presented a paper on related aspects of this material in 2004 at a colloquium in Ghent entitled *Van Nu en Straks als gangmaker: Vlaamse tijdschriften in het fin de siècle*; my thanks are due to fellow participants and, in particular, to conference organizer and expert on *Van Nu & Straks* Hans Vandevoorde.

1. In 1905 the letters began to appear in serial form in *Kritiek van Beeldende Kunst en Kunstnijverheid*. See Carol M. Zemel, *The formation of a legend: Van Gogh criticism, 1890-1920*, Ann Arbor 1977 & Michigan 1980, p. 164 n. 101. For a brief overview of the early publishing history of the letters, see Jan Hulsker, *Vincent van Gogh: A guide to his work and letters*, Amsterdam 1993, pp. 9-10. See also A. M. Hammacher, 'Van Gogh and the words', in J. B. de la Faille, *The works of Vincent van Gogh: His paintings and his drawings*, Amsterdam 1970, pp. 10-37. Hammacher includes a brief but useful discussion of the publication of the letters in a Belgian context (p. 19).

2. The aims are outlined in *Van Nu & Straks* 1 (1893), no. 1, unpaginated first page. For book design in Belgium, see Jane Block, 'Book design among the vingties: The work of Lemmen, Van de Velde and Van Rysselberghe at the fin-de-siècle', in exhib. cat. *Les XX and the Belgian avant-garde: Prints, drawings, and books ca. 1890*, Lawrence, Kansas (Spencer Museum of Art) 1992, pp. 98-125.

3. These ideas were discussed in the correspondence between the organizers. See L. van Dijk (ed.), *Het ontstaan van Van Nu en Straks: Een brieven editie 1890-1894*, 2 vols., Antwerp 1988.

4. August Vermeylen, 'De Vlaamse letteren van Gezelle tot heden', in *Verzameld werk*, 6 vols.,

Brussels 1953, vol. 3, p. 645. This is discussed in Anne-Marie Musschoot, 'Van Nu en Straks: A Flemish art nouveau periodical, 1893-1901', *Dutch Crossing* 35 (August 1988), p. 45.

5. The other editors were Cyriel Buysse (1859-1932), Emmanuel de Bom (1868-1953) and Prosper van Langendonck (1862-1920). For a discussion, see A. van Elsander, preface, in *Van Nu en Straks 1893-1901: Een vrij voorhoede- orgaan gewijd aan de kunst van nu, nieuwsgierig naar de kunst-nog-in-wording – die van straks*. Bloemlezing, ed. Anne-Marie Musschoot, The Hague 1982; and G. van Kerckhoven, 'Het Van Goghnummer van *Van Nu en Straks*: De rol van Henry van de Velde bij het tot stand komen van het derde nummer van de eerste reeks', undated manuscript in Van Gogh Museum library, Amsterdam.

6. The letters reproduced in *Van Nu & Straks*, in the order in which they appear there, are: 258/225; 250/218; 253/221; 265/231; 261/228; 522/418; 538/427; 548/437; 540/429; 710/554; 801/604; 802/605; 520/663.

7. Livens was an English artist whom Van Gogh knew during his period in Antwerp (January-February 1886); his name is printed incorrectly as 'Lievens' in *Van Nu & Straks*.

8. For a discussion of this image, see exhib. cat. *Les XX and the Belgian avant-garde*, pp. 354-55.

9. Van Kerckhoven, 'Het Van Goghnummer', pp. 23-24; Hammacher, 'Van Gogh and the words', p. 19.

10. *Van Nu & Straks* 1 (1893), no. 3, p. 1.

11. The Dutch vignettes are the subject of a paper I presented in October 2004 in Ghent at the colloquium *Van Nu en Straks als gangmaker: Vlaamse tijdschriften in het fin de siècle*. It appeared in Dutch as 'Radical beeldtaal in *Van Nu en Straks*: De Nederlandse bijdragen aan het Van Gogh-nummer' in an anthology on *Van Nu & Straks ('Niet onder één vlag': Van Nu en Straks en de paradoxen van het fin de siècle*, ed. Raf de Bont, Geraldine Reymenants and Hans Vandevoorde, Ghent 2005).

12. For an account of Vermeylen's trip to the Netherlands made to consolidate ties with those in Holland already interested in the periodical and to try to recruit more subscribers, see Johan Thorn Prikker's letter of 27 November 1892 in *Brieven van Johan Thorn Prikker: Met een voorwoord van Henri Borel*, Amsterdam 1897, p. 79.

13. The Dutch artist Theo Molkenboer (1871-1920) also submitted a work intended for the cover; it was rejected, probably because it would have replaced Van de Velde's cover design. See Van Kerckhoven, 'Het Van Goghnummer', p. 28; and Joop M. Joosten, 'Henry van de Velde en Nederland 1892-1902: De Belgische art nouveau en de Nederlandsche nieuwe kunst', *Cahier Henry van de Velde* 12-13 (1974), p. 44 n. 45.
14. This exhibition was held in the Art room of the Panorama Building in Amsterdam from 17 December 1892 to 5 February 1893. There were 87 paintings, 25 drawings and, according to Faille, an unspecified number of letters exhibited ('List of exhibitions 1888-1943', Faille, *The works of Vincent van Gogh*, p. 691). I have been unable to find any evidence to support Faille's suggestion that letters were in fact exhibited.
15. Bernard published these letters he had received from Van Gogh in a series of thirteen articles (Emile Bernard, 'Vincent van Gogh', *Mercure de France* (1893): no. 40, pp. 324-39; no. 41, pp. 1-22; no. 42, pp. 112-22; no. 43, pp. 211-17; no. 44, pp. 303-15; no. 45, pp. 69-76; no. 46, pp. 109-19; no. 47, pp. 263-72; (1894): no. 49, pp. 29-35; no. 51, pp. 221-29; no. 55, pp. 248-61; no. 57, pp. 17-25; no. 62, pp. 208-19).
16. *Van Nu & Straks* 1 (1893), no. 3, p. 2.
17. The most comprehensive work concerning the mythologizing surrounding Van Gogh is *The mythology of Vincent van Gogh*, ed. Tsukasa Kôdera, Tokyo & Amsterdam 1993. Other literature concerning the reception of Van Gogh includes Joop M. Joosten, 'Van Gogh Publications', nos. 9-15, in *Museumjournaal* 14 (1969): no. 3, pp. 154-57; no. 4, pp. 216-19; no. 5, pp. 269-73; 15 (1970): no. 1, pp. 47-49; no. 2, pp. 100-3; no. 3, pp. 154-58; Hammacher, 'Van Gogh and the words'; Zemel, *The formation of a legend*; and Fred Leeman, 'Van Goghs postume roem in de lage landen', in exhib. cat. *Vincent van Gogh en de moderne kunst*, Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 1990, pp. 162-81.
18. Albert Aurier, 'Les Isolées: Vincent van Gogh', *Mercure de France* 1, no. 1 (January 1890), pp. 24-29.
19. Van Kerckhoven, 'Het Van Goghnummer', p. 40. The correspondence between Henry van de Velde and Jo van Gogh-Bonger referred to here is in the Van Gogh Museum archives. It is also reproduced in Van Kerckhoven.
20. Letter from Henry van de Velde to Jo van Gogh-Bonger dated April 1893; Van Kerckhoven, 'Het Van Goghnummer', p. 10.
21. Letter from Henry van de Velde to Jo van Gogh-Bonger dated July 1893; Van Kerckhoven, 'Het Van Goghnummer', p. 24.
22. A. Vermeylen, *Verzameld werk*, vol. 4, p. 475-76, quoted in Van Kerckhoven, 'Het Van Goghnummer', p. 21.
23. Ibid.
24. Letter 522/418, for example, is twelve pages in length; number 538/427 is ten pages. It is unclear from the correspondence if Jo van Gogh-Bonger sent all of the letters in their entirety or if in some cases, especially with the longer letters, it was a question of portions of the letters being sent.
25. Hammacher, 'Van Gogh and the words', p. 19. The history of Henry van de Velde's involvement with the letters, including the temporary loss of the letters in the mail, is documented in Van Kerckhoven, 'Het Van Goghnummer'.
26. The most complete publication of the correspondence is *De brieven van Vincent van Gogh*, ed. Han van Crimpén and Monique Barends-Albert, 4 vols., The Hague 1990 (hereafter cited as *Brieven* 1990). It should be noted that there is an annotated, multi-volume publication of the correspondence currently under preparation at the Van Gogh Museum, which, when published, will represent the most complete edition of the letters.
27. Letter 258/255. 15 August is the date given in *Van Nu & Straks* and on the original letter. Recent publications of the letters, such as *Brieven* 1990, have used the date 14 August 1882, it would appear mistakenly.
28. The sketch of the first painting, with which Van Gogh illustrated his description in the original letter, was not included.
29. 'qui y mettent leur peau'. For Van Gogh's admiration for and emulation of Millet, see exhib. cat. *Van Gogh & Millet*, Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum Vincent van Gogh) 1989.
30. Van Gogh would quote these words again in a longer citation (209/180). For this and Van Gogh's reading of Sensier's biography of Millet (in March 1882), see exhib. cat. *Van Gogh & Millet*, especially p. 13.
31. Letter 250/218. This letter appears to be out of sequence. Although dated only with the year 1882 on the original letter and in *Van Nu & Straks*, it has since been dated 21 July 1882

(see for example *Brieven* 1990).

32. I have discussed Van Gogh's realist concerns in relation to the theory of Théophile Thoré in Joan E. Greer, "Christ, this great artist" – Van Gogh's socio-religious canon of art', in exhib. cat. *Vincent's choice: The musée imaginaire of Van Gogh*, Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 2003, pp. 61-72.

33. Letter 253/221. This letter, from The Hague, is dated 31 July 1882 on the original letter (*Brieven* 1990 gives c. 1 August 1882). Van Gogh included a drawing of the cradle in his original letter to Theo.

34. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 8.

35. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 9.

36. Letter 265/231. This letter from The Hague is dated 1883 in *Van Nu & Straks* but 17 December 1882 in *Brieven* 1990. The original is undated.

37. Letter 261/228. This letter from The Hague is dated 1885 in *Van Nu & Straks* (3 September 1882 in *Brieven* 1990). The date on the original is unclear.

38. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 12.

39. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 16.

40. Letter 522/418, dated 1885 in *Van Nu & Straks* (July 1885 in *Brieven* 1990).

41. Letter 538/427, dated 1885 in *Van Nu & Straks* (October 1885 in *Brieven* 1990).

42. The excursion to the city is not explicitly referred to in the excerpts reproduced.

43. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 25.

44. Letter 548/437, dated here 1885 (28 November 1885 in *Brieven* 1990); and letter 540/429, dated here 1886 (Nuenen, 28 November 1885 in *Brieven* 1990).

45. Letter 710/554, dated here October 1888 (16 October 1888 in *Brieven* 1990).

46. Letter 801/604, dated here 1890 (5 or 6 September 1889 in *Brieven* 1990). The original letter was more than ten pages in length.

47. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 32.

48. The first series of *Van Nu & Straks* was closely tied to the ideas first conceived by Les XX. For connections between the two groups see Musschoot, 'Van Nu en Straks', p. 46, and exhib. cat. *Les XX and the Belgian avant-garde*, pp. 354-55.

49. This side of Van Gogh's reception – the early exhibiting of his work and publications about (or, as here, by) him in Belgium, tends to be an underrepresented area in Van Gogh scholarship.

50. Letter 802/605, dated here 1888 (7 or 8 September 1889 in *Brieven* 1990). This later date makes the content of the letter more coherent to readers familiar with the chronology of Van Gogh's life. The inaccuracies of the date and place of this letter are unlikely to have been noticed except by those who had worked most closely with Van Gogh.

51. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 33.

52. Letter 663/520, dated here 1888 (18 August 1888 in *Brieven* 1990).

53. For a discussion of Van Gogh's use of the image of clogs as a symbol of rural life and of the peasant, as well as the relevance of Millet in relation to these concerns, see Nienke Bakker, 'On rustics and labourers: Van Gogh and "The People"', in exhib. cat. *Vincent's choice*, pp. 96-98. Although not identified by name, Van Gogh refers in this discussion to his peasant painting *Portrait of Patience Escalier* (1888; F 444 JH 1563) and relates it to Toulouse-Lautrec's *Young woman at a table: 'Poudre de riz'* (1887; Van Gogh Museum).

54. The following month he would find a model for the work – the Belgian painter Eugène Boch; the resulting portrait (*Eugène Boch*, 3 September 1888; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; F 462 JH 1574) had much in common with this description.

55. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 34.

56. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 35.

57. Ibid. See n. 53.

58. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 35.

59. *Van Nu & Straks* I (1893), no. 3, p. 36.

60. *Brieven van Johan Thorn Prikker*. For a more recent, annotated edition of this correspondence, see Johan Thorn Prikker, *De brieven van Johan Thorn Prikker aan Henri Borel en anderen 1892-1904: Met ter inleiding fragmenten uit het dagboek van Henri Borel 1890-1892*, ed. Joop M. Joosten, Nieuwkoop 1980. These letters appeared in *Het Tweemaandelijksch Tijdschrift* in November 1895 and January and March 1896.

61. This phenomenon has recently been examined in a number of studies including the following: Christopher Parsons and Neil McWilliam, "Le paysan de Paris": Alfred Sensier and the myth of rural France', *The Oxford Art Journal* 6 (1983), no. 2, pp. 37-58; Nicholas Green, 'Art history and the construction of individuality' (book review of Zemel, *The works of Vincent van Gogh*) in *The Oxford Art Journal* 6 (1983), no. 2, pp. 80-82; Nicholas Green, 'Dealing in temperaments: Economic

- transformation of the artistic field in France during the second half of the nineteenth century', *Art History* 10 (March 1987), pp. 59-78; Nicholas Green, *The spectacle of nature: Landscape and bourgeois culture in nineteenth century France*, Manchester & New York 1990; and Greg M. Thomas, 'Instituting genius: the formation of biographical art history in France', *Art history and its institutions: Foundations of a discipline*, London 2002, pp. 260-70. How such writings were connected to marketing practices is discussed in Robert Jensen, *Marketing modernism in fin-de-siècle Europe*, Princeton 1994.
62. Alfred Sensier (1815-1877), *Souvenirs sur Th. Rousseau*, Paris 1872; and *La vie et l'œuvre de Jean-François Millet*, Paris 1881.
63. Parsons and McWilliam, 'Le paysan de Paris', p. 53.
64. On this subject, see, for example, Green, 'Art history and the construction of individuality', p. 81; Greg M. Thomas, *Art and ecology in nineteenth-century France: The landscapes of Théodore Rousseau*, Princeton 2000, p. 77; and Thomas, 'Instituting genius', pp. 266-67. The focus on temperament in relation to naturalism, in turn, finds direct roots in romanticism.
65. Anita Vriend has discussed the possibility of Van Gogh having considered the future publication of his correspondence. See Anita Vriend, *De briefschetsen van Vincent van Gogh* (master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1990), pp. iii-iv.
66. Zemel, *The works of Vincent van Gogh*.
67. See, for example, Sura Levine's discussion of this subject and the attitude among Belgian artists involved with socially engaged art during the final decades of the nineteenth century: 'Politics and the graphic arts of the Belgian avant-garde', in exhib. cat. *Les XX and the Belgian avant-garde*, p. 55. Levine notes that to these artists 'modernity implied a specific relationship between art and labor and class struggles.' Eugenia W. Herbert has also dealt with this subject extensively in *The artist and social reform: France and Belgium, 1885-1898*, New Haven 1961.
68. For biographical information on Van de Velde, see Susan M. Canning in exhib. cat. *Henry van de Velde: Paintings and drawings*, Antwerp (Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten) 1987. Note that Van de Velde later wrote that it was due to his knowledge of Van Gogh's work that he decided in 1894, after visiting Johanna van Gogh, the widow of Theo, to focus completely on the applied arts.
69. Joosten, 'Henry van de Velde', pp. 13-14.
70. Amy Ogata, 'Artisans and art nouveau in fin-de-siècle Belgium: Primitivism and nostalgia', in Lynda Jessup (ed.), *Antimodernism and artistic experience: Policing the boundaries of modernity*, Toronto 2001, pp. 167; Jane Block, *Les XX and Belgian avant-gardism, 1868-1894*, Ann Arbor 1984, pp. 57, 100 n. 114.
71. Ogata, 'Artisans and art nouveau', p. 167.
72. Van de Velde did not see Millet's peasants, whom he rejected as too theatrical, as being as 'authentic' as those of the much more radical and anarchist-linked artist Pissarro. It should be noted that Van de Velde also highlighted the art of neo-impressionism in this lecture (Ogata, 'Artisans and art nouveau', p. 167).
73. Henry van de Velde, 'XX', *Van Nu & Straks* 1 (1893), no. 2, pp. 20-23.
74. Crane's book *The claims of decorative art* (London 1892) would be translated by Jan Veth in 1894 as *Kunst en samenleving* (Art and society). For a discussion of this see Ernst Braches, *Het boek als nieuwe kunst, 1892-1903: Een studie in art nouveau*, Utrecht 1973, pp. 61-81.
75. A. v. de Meere (pseud. August Vermeylen), 'Aantekeningen over een hedendaagsche richting', *Van Nu & Straks* 1 (1893), no. 2, pp. 9-16.
76. Ibid.
77. For a comprehensive discussion of 'gemeenschapskunst' with a focus on the Netherlands, see Lieske Tibbe, R.N. Roland Holst 1868-1938: *Arbeid en schoonheid vereend: Opvattingen over gemeenschapskunst*, Amsterdam 1994.
78. August Vermeylen, 'De kunst in de Vrije Gemeenschap', *Van Nu & Straks* 1 (1894), no. 6-7, pp. 52-56; and in *Architectura* 2 (1894), pp. 229-30; (1895), pp. 6-8. For a discussion of this see A.B.G.M. van Kalmthout, *Muzentempels: Multidisciplinaire kunstkringen in Nederland tussen 1880 en 1914*, Hilversum 1998, p. 619 n. 392.
79. For a discussion of anarchism within Belgian art circles see Francis Strauven, 'L'anarchisme à nos portes', in exhib. cat. *Art nouveau Belgique*, Brussels 1980.
80. Exhib. cat. *Van Nu en Straks: Belle époque in Vlaanderen*, Ghent (Sint-Pietersabdij) 1983, p. 12.
81. On Reclus, see Ogata, 'Artisans and art nouveau', p. 170.
82. Elisée Reclus, preface in Peter Kropotkin,

The conquest of bread, Montreal 1990,
pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

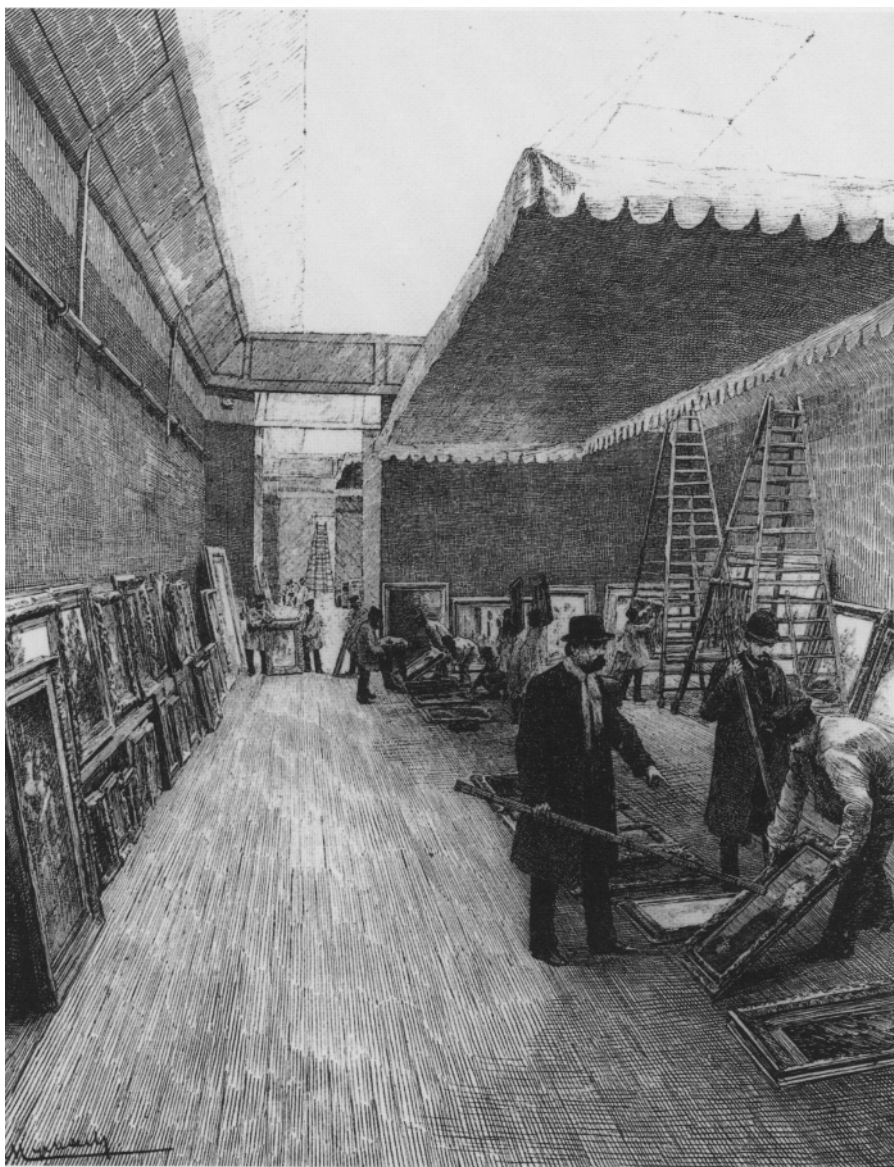
83. Ibid., pp. xxxiii-xxxv.

84. Kropotkin, *The conquest of bread*, p. 148.

This is not to suggest that either Sensier or Van Gogh was consciously looking to anarchist theory, but rather to point out significant shared concerns; in the case of those involved with *Van Nu & Straks*, however, the connections with anarchist theory are indisputable.

85. Kropotkin, *The conquest of bread*,
pp. 129-31, 133.

The *Digitale bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren* offers a full reproduction of the first year of *Van Nu & Straks* at http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_vanoo2189301_01/index.htm



1. Felician von Myrbach, *The arrangement of paintings*; from *Paris Illustré*, no. 30 (1 May 1885), p. 99

Careers and canvases: The rise of the market for modern art in nineteenth-century Paris

David W. Galenson
Robert Jensen

Canvases and careers

In 1965, Harrison and Cynthia White published a small book, modestly titled *Canvases and careers: Institutional change in the French painting world*.¹ The book was quickly accepted by art historians as an innovative and authoritative work, and it has remained popular to the present: a new edition was published in 1993, and *Canvases and careers* remains in print today, more than forty years after its first appearance. Its longevity stems from the book's true subject, which is considerably more important than the book's rather restrictive subtitle would suggest. For *Canvases and careers* is in fact an account of the emergence of the market for a new product – modern painting – in the nineteenth century. Unlike art in most earlier eras, modern art has not typically been commissioned by, or produced directly for, specific patrons. And also in contrast to most earlier eras, the radical innovations embodied in modern art have made its acceptance problematic. Consequently, scholars and artists alike have been intensely interested in how modern art has been sold, to whom, and under what circumstances.

Although no single research project has re-examined all the subjects treated by the Whites, a number of studies have produced new information that bears on many of the central issues they considered. The cumulative effect of this scholarship has been to overturn many of the Whites' central arguments. Yet their descriptions, especially concerning the 'dealer-critic system', continue to be cited as authoritative even by scholars whose own work has undermined much of the validity of the Whites' analyses.²

Consequently, before a revised and synthetic account of the emergence of the market for modern painting can be undertaken we need to take measure of the Whites' arguments. *Canvases and careers* describes a change in what the authors refer to as the institutional structure of the nineteenth-century French art world, from what they call the Academic system to the dealer-critic system. We can briefly summarize the authors' account of these two regimes as follows: The Academic system was controlled by the government's Académie de Peinture et Sculpture (hereafter the Academy). Aspiring artists were educated at the government's Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where they were taught to use traditional methods to emulate the work of their teachers. While at the Ecole students advanced if they passed annual examinations, and participated in a series of contests designed to identify the most talented. After graduation, the goal of young artists was to display their paintings at the Salon, the great annual or biennial exhibition that was the French art world's principal showcase for new work. Jury review regulated admission to the Salon. Although its composition varied, a majority of the jury's members were usually associated with the Academy. The Academy consequently used the Salon as a continuing means of control over artists: not only acceptance of their paintings, but preferential placement of their work in the many crowded halls of the Salon, and access to the medals that the jury awarded to recognize distinction, were all central to building the reputations that would create a demand from private clients for the artists' work.

The Whites argue that the Academic system focused not on artists' careers but on the individual canvases shown at the Salon: 'By the system's own definition [...] each canvas led an independent existence as a separate entity with its own reputation and history. [...] It was the picture, not the artist, around which the official ideology centered. [...] The Academic system emphasized individual canvases rather than the careers of painters.'³ They contend that this became an increasingly damaging flaw as the number of French artists grew over the course of the century and the Salon was overwhelmed by massive numbers of unrelated works. Thus what undermined the power of the Salon was not any small group, but rather growing masses of aspiring painters: 'Pressure from the greatly expanded number of professional painters on an organizational and economic framework conceived to handle a few hundred men was the driving force toward institutional change.'⁴ After mid-century, the Academic system progressively gave way to a new system.

The impressionists initiated this new dealer-critic system.⁵ It emerged partly in response to a growing demand for paintings by members of the French middle class. Instead of the large paintings of historical subjects favoured by the Academy, which had typically been purchased for public museums and stately mansions, the new buyers wanted smaller paintings of less formal themes to decorate their homes. Private dealers emerged to serve these customers. These dealers focused not on individual paintings, but on the careers of artists. Because a dealer would establish a continuing business relationship with an artist, the dealer had an interest in building the artist's reputation, in order to create a consistent demand for his work: 'A current painting as an isolated item in trade is simply too fugitive to focus a publicity system upon [...] it was the career of an artist that had to be the focus of the system.'⁶

Critics also assumed a new importance in this system. Instead of merely judging the works presented to the public at the Salon, their writing could serve as an alternative means of publicizing artists' work. And as the early development of modern art began to shift the interest of artwork from subject matter to technique, critics began to play a more complex role as theorists for new developments. Yet as their primacy in the Whites' name for the new system suggests, dealers were the primary force in creating and developing the new system.

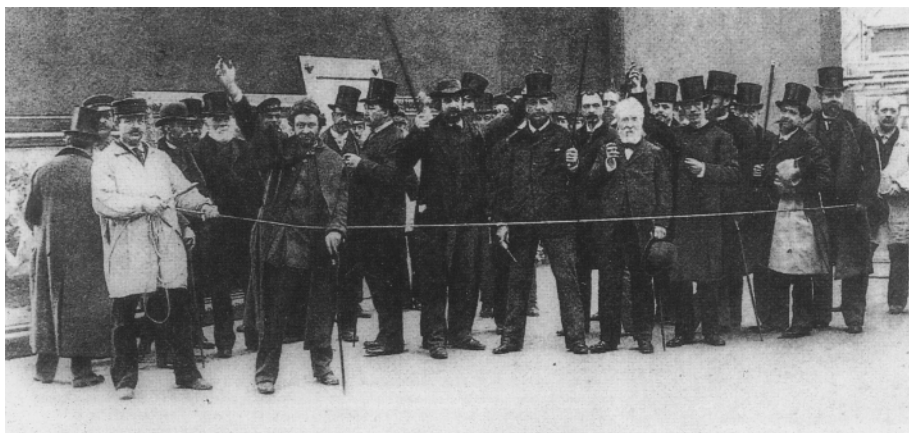
With dealers serving as the entrepreneurs, and critics as the publicists and theoreticians for the new art, the dealer-critic system replaced the Academic system: 'The Academy and the state were once arbiters of taste, patrons, educators of the young, and publicists. Now these functions were spread out and assumed by different parts of the new system.'⁷ Competition, in both economic and intellectual markets, was the hallmark of the new system: 'dealer-patrons were in competition with one another and each critic was eager to be spokesman for his own artistic movement.'⁸ The free market thus became the artist's protector, as 'this framework provided more widely and generously for a larger number of artists and particularly for the young untried painter than did the Academic arrangements.'⁹

The dealer-critic system developed over the course of the second half of the century. It benefited the impressionists only late in their careers, 'for they came along before the new system was fully developed and legitimate'.¹⁰ But the leaders of the next generation were in a different position: 'Gauguin, Signac, and Seurat had been nurtured in the impressionists' world of café discussions, joint learning and experimentation, group exhibition and dealer competition.'¹¹

The Salon system to 1874

A revision of the Whites' presentation might best begin by renaming what they call the 'Academic system' a 'Salon system', because the Academy was only one, albeit very important, participant in the struggle for control of the Salon throughout the century.¹² Whereas Salon management might change composition from one year to the next, the Salon itself exerted a monopoly over how artists could fashion their careers.

The Salon dominated French art for so long, unlike comparable institutions elsewhere, because both artists and their publics sustained the belief that it was the only truly legitimate arena for exhibiting and evaluating works of art.¹³ The certifying function of the Salon survived the many controversies over the judgement of Salon juries, over who voted for the juries, and over who served on them. As Gustave Courbet (1819-1877) observed following the refusal of all the paintings he submitted to the Salon of 1847, 'It is bias on the part of the gentlemen of the jury: they refuse all those who do not belong to their school, except for one or two, against whom they can no longer fight, such as MM. Delacroix, Decamps, Diaz, but all those who are not as well known by the public are sent away without a word. That does not bother me in the least, from the point of view of their judgement, but to make a name for oneself one must exhibit, and, unfortunately, that is the only exhibition there is.'¹⁴ Until 1874, showing at the Salon was a necessary condition for establishing an artist's reputation and career in Paris. After 1874, major artists such as Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) and Georges Seurat (1859-1891) discovered they could establish their careers outside the review of the Salon's juries.¹⁵



2. Salon jury voting, c. 1885

The Salons grew rapidly in size early in the century and steadily increased thereafter, from 705 entries in 1806 to 7,289 entries in 1880.¹⁶ At the same time, the Salon was organized in such a way that an artist could usually exhibit only a very small number of works. Limited exhibition opportunities encouraged the display of 'machines' – special, often quite large works of art, to which an artist might devote unusual effort, with the purpose of attracting the attention of the Salon jury, of the press, and ultimately the buying public.

Table 1 (pp. 142-43) surveys the successful Salon careers of a short list of painters, indicating the number and variety of honours they received and the ages at which they received them.¹⁷ With so many rewards available, important French Salon artists who made their debut after the first quarter of the century often earned at least three medals over their careers and sometimes more, as well as a variety of other honours. So while it is true that the Salon format encouraged the production of individual masterworks, the counterbalancing system of prizes and honours provided for Salon-favoured artists over their entire careers, and not simply year by year as the Whites suggest. As the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu observed, under this regime painters had 'a *career*, a well-defined succession of honours, from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts to the Institute, by way of the hierarchy of awards given at the Salon exhibitions.'¹⁸ Bourdieu went on to declare that under the Salon system, 'the artist is a high-level civil servant of art.'¹⁹

Because medal winners were often given special privileges, such as the right to vote for the Salon jury, or being *hors concours* – allowed to exhibit without submitting their work to jury review, the prize system was essential for an artist's career, and, as Table 1 illustrates,²⁰ once in the system a successful artist's progression up the ladder of awards occurred at often remarkably regular intervals.²¹ In practice, the awards appear to have been given to favoured artists even when their current work did not necessarily merit them. For example, in a diary entry from 1853 Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) observed, 'It almost always happens that every painter who seems to me to deserve a third class, a second, or a first class medal has already obtained it. [...] It thus happens that an artist rarely receives a reward for that one among his works which deserves it the most. [...] The man who has done well twice is more meritorious than the man who has done well once.'²² Medals and membership in the Légion d'honneur were not in themselves sufficient to guarantee an artist's personal fortune, but they significantly publicized careers in a manner entirely unavailable to artists who might wish to work outside the Salon system.

Having won prizes early in his career, an artist might choose to forego further honours, but for the vast majority of artists the lure of this system remained very strong. Courbet, for example, developed lucrative commercial outlets for his paintings, yet continued to exhibit in the Salon. Similarly, Edouard Manet (1832-1883) consorted with his impressionist friends but refused to abandon the Salon

Table 1. Salon careers of come notable nineteenth-century French painters, listed by age of artist when granted Salon admission, prizes, medals, ranks in the Légion d'honneur and/or chairs

Artist	Prix de Rome	Salon Debut	Medals at Salon	Medals at Exp. Univ.
Ingres, b. 1780	21	22		75
H. Vernet, b. 1789		21	23	
Cogniet, b. 1794	23	26	30	
Scheffer, b. 1795		17	23	
Corot, b. 1796		31	36, 52	59, 71
Delaroche, b. 1797		25	27	
Robert-Fleury, b. 1797		27	27, 37, 38	58, 70
Delacroix, b. 1798		24	26, 50	57
Roqueplan, b. 1800		22	27, 34	
Decamps, b. 1803		24	28, 30	52
Isabey, b. 1803		21	21, 24	52
Rousseau, T., b. 1812		19	22, 24, 37	43, 55
Millet, b. 1814		26	39	41, 53
Meissonier, b. 1815		19	25, 26, 28, 33, 40	52
Daubigny, b. 1817		21	31, 36, 40, 42	50,
Hébert, b. 1817	22	22	33, 50, 78, 83	38, 72
Courbet, b. 1819		25	30	
Ziem, b. 1821		28	30, 31	34
Bonheur, b. 1822		19	23, 26	33, 45
Cabanel, b. 1823	22	21	22, 29	32, 44
Gérôme, b. 1824		23	23, 31, 50	43
Puvis de Chavannes, b. 1824		31	37, 40, 58	43
Bouguereau, b. 1825	25	24	32, 43, 60	30, 42, 53
Breton, b. 1827		22	30, 32, 45	28, 40
Baudry, b. 1828	22	23	29, 33, 53, 59	
Henner, b. 1829	29	34	34, 35, 36, 43	49, 71
Vollon, b. 1833		31	33, 35, 36	45, 67
Bonnat, b. 1833		24	28, 36	34
Fantin-Latour, b. 1836		25	34, 39	<i>Hors concours</i> 1889
Lefebvre, b. 1836	25	19	29, 32, 34	42, 53
Carolus-Duran, b. 1837		26	29, 32, 33, 42	41
Laurens, b. 1838		27	31, 34, 39	<i>Hors concours</i> 1889
Lhermitte, b. 1844		20	30, 36	45
Benjamin-Constant, b. 1845		24	30, 31	33
Cormon, Fernand, b. 1845		18	25, 28, 32	33, 44
Roll, b. 1846		24	29, 31	<i>Hors concours</i> 1889
Detaille, b. 1848		19	21, 22, 24, 40	41
Dagnan-Bouveret, b. 1852		22	26, 28, 37	37
Average age	24	24	28 (first medal) 34 (second medal)	44 (first medal)

Sources: Clara Stranahan, *A history of French painting*, New York 1893; with additional information taken from E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire critique et documentaire des peintres, sculpteurs.*, rev. ed., Paris 1999; Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Leipzig 1907-; and the official catalogues of the Paris Salon.

Chevalier	Officier	Commandeur	Institut	Prof at EBA or Rome	Retrospective [posthumous]
45	53	65	47	53	[1867]
36	45	53	37		66
34	52		55	61	
33	40	53 (refused)			[1859]
50	71				[1875]
31	37	38	35		[1857]
39	52	70	53	68	
33	48	57	59		57
34	52				
36	48				52
29	49				
40	55				43
54					53
31	41	52	46		
42	56				
36	50	57	57	44, 65, 69	
49 (refused)					
36	57	87			
43					
32	40		40	40	
31	43	54	41	39	
43	55	65			
34	51	60	51	50	
34	40	62	59		
33	41	47	42		
44	49	69	60		
37	45	55	65		
34	41	-	48	55	
43					
34	42	61	55		
35	41	52	67	68	
36	40	(Grand Off. 62)	54	48	
40	50		61		
33	39		48		
35	44	67	53	52	
37	43				
25	33	49	44		
33	47		48		
37	47	59	51	53	

for their renegade exhibitions. The Salon continued to tempt even the impressionists, beginning with the decision of Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) to return to the Salon in 1878, subsequently followed by Claude Monet (1840-1926). In the wake of the impressionists' exhibitions, however, some younger artists began to behave in such a way as to suggest they viewed the Salon as unnecessary, or even not a viable career path.

Promoting careers

The Salon's monopoly over the French art market was directly related to its ability to control publicity. Merely exhibiting a work of art in a dealer's shop window or at one of the cultural circles that became popular in the 1860s could not compete with the Salon as a means of commanding the attention of critics and thereby building one's reputation. A critical review was perhaps not the exclusive sign that an artist had passed from being merely exhibited to having acquired a significant reputation, but it was by far the most visible and important indicator.²³ It mattered therefore that the daily press and the cultural journals were reluctant to review any alternative exhibition and would usually do so only under special circumstances. One-artist shows without state sponsorship suffered consistently from critical neglect. Despite his already considerable renown, Manet's 1867 self-arranged retrospective drew virtually no response from critics.²⁴ James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), who with Manet had scandalized the public at the 1863 Salon des refusés, was given a solo show at Durand-Ruel's gallery in 1873, yet his exhibition was apparently mentioned only once, in an article devoted to the larger issue of *japonisme* in contemporary French art.²⁵

Prior to the 1870s, only the Salon exhibitions had the capacity to attract consistent, serious and widespread attention from critics. Even into the twentieth century, the official Salons received considerably more press attention than all other types of contemporary art exhibitions. Each Salon (or the two Salons after 1890) was greeted by lengthy critical reviews in the steadily increasing number of daily newspapers and weekly, bi-weekly and monthly journals. These reviews were often printed over the course of multiple issues of a periodical. Despite the fact that many critics complained that the Salon fostered mediocrity, particularly during the second half of the century, Salon-related publications grew more lavish rather than less so, and new specialized kinds of Salon-related publications appeared, some clearly aimed at tourists.²⁶

Art historians have paid little attention to the process by which artists were selected by reviewers for comments. We know, however, that having one's painting 'skied' – hung in the topmost tiers on a wall of canvases – was nearly as bad as being refused outright by the jury. Frédéric Bazille (1841-1870), for example, wrote

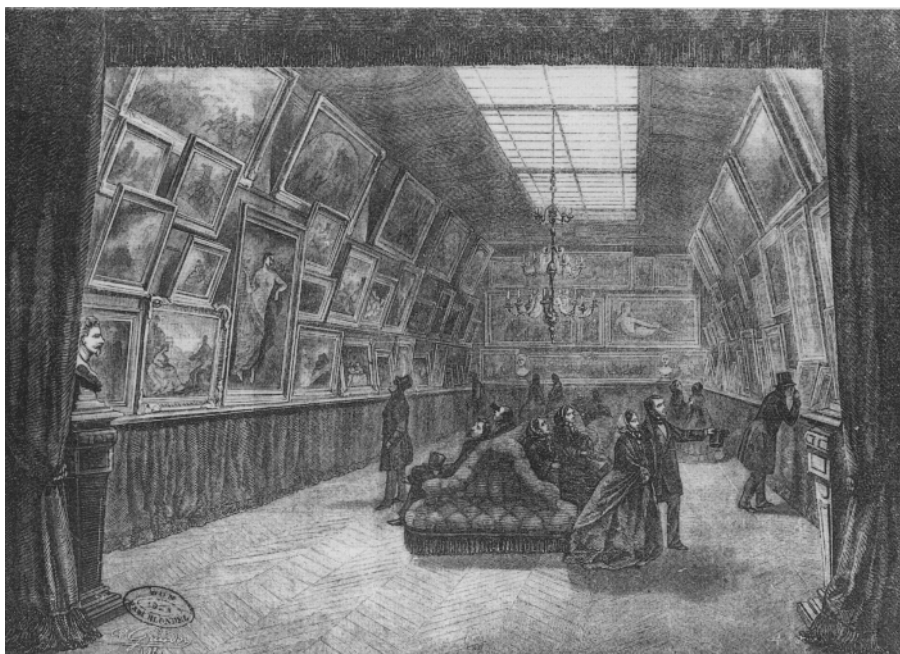
dejectedly to his parents in 1869, 'I am as poorly hung as possible.'²⁷ The next year he told them excitedly, 'I am delighted with my exhibition. My picture is very well hung. Everybody sees it and talks about it. Often more bad than good is said of it, but at least I'm in the swim and whatever I shall show from now on will be noticed.'²⁸ Clearly, once exhibits numbered in the thousands, Salon juries were charged not only with the task of finding places for so many works of art, but also with influencing the public reception of any artist's work.²⁹ Current prize-winners were obviously highly publicized, but the Salon catalogues also listed by the artists' names the honours they held, and each preface indicated the previous year's prize-winners.

A successful Salon painting promoted an artist's reputation and raised public interest generally in the artist's oeuvre. Since only the most successful artists at the Salon could hope to shift the burden of acting as their own business manager to an art dealer, it was an important right for artists to list their studio addresses in the Salon catalogues. They counted on collectors and dealers attracted by their contributions to the Salon to pay studio visits.³⁰ There the patron might see and purchase the artist's other work or commission future works.

Selling Salon artists

Very few dealers handled contemporary art on any significant scale until the end of the century. The Whites' observation that in 1861 there were no fewer than 104 different 'marchands de tableaux' in Paris significantly overstates the number of art dealers involved with contemporary painting.³¹ In a series of articles published in *L'Artiste* between 1854 and 1860 regarding 'the street museum' – as one critic called the contemporary picture galleries that were beginning to coalesce around the rue Laffitte, only fourteen dealers were mentioned overall.³² Even fewer operated their galleries in such a way as to help popularize the artists they served.

There did exist a few 'entrepreneurial dealers', as Albert Boime has described them, promoting artists who themselves had begun to look beyond the state to the new, middle-class audience for art.³³ Such galleries tended to develop, like Adolphe Goupil's firm, out of the print trade, growing rich by printing and selling reproductions after notable Salon paintings, which were distributed nationally and internationally through a network of representatives. The Goupil gallery became after the 1850s increasingly involved in selling contemporary Salon art, in which capacity it served primarily as a middleman between the Paris art market and foreign galleries. Mirroring their earlier activities as print publishers, Goupil's largest sales were to other galleries, like Knoedler's in New York, rather than to individual patrons.³⁴



3. Gallery of Goupil & Cie in the rue Chaptal, Paris, c. 1860

Significantly, the most successful galleries remained intimately connected with the Salon system. They often sought exclusive contracts with important Salon artists, such as the one William Bouguereau (1825-1905) signed with Goupil's in 1865, in which the artist agreed to give the gallery ten to twelve paintings for twenty years.³⁵ Both artist and dealer received a measure of financial security from this contractual arrangement. The dealer had the assurance that the artist, presumably already in demand by collectors, would sell only through his firm, at fixed rates. In return the artist received a regular and sometimes very substantial income.

The Salon also shaped the buying habits of collectors who visited these commercial galleries. George A. Lucas, an American art agent active in Paris between the 1860s and the 1880s, made over two and a half million francs worth of purchases on behalf of the New York dealer Samuel Avery alone.³⁶ During the 1860s Lucas expressed interest in or bought the work of about one hundred different artists from the commercial galleries he visited. In all these transactions, Lucas mentioned in his business diary just twenty-eight galleries. Of these, Lucas records just eight dealers who possessed paintings by five or more artists of interest to

him, and only four galleries handled the work of ten or more such artists. More than ninety of the artists that Lucas referred to in his diaries in relation to a commercial gallery during the 1860s had already won at least one medal at the Salon.

Only a few galleries could afford, like Goupil, to buy and to sell at high prices and to acquire any one artist's work in volume, and thereby provide significant financial support to an artist. Most galleries simply acquired their paintings piecemeal, generally buying and selling at low prices. These dealers ran their businesses much in the manner described by Emile Zola in his novel *L'œuvre* through the practices of the fictional character of Malgras. Zola based Malgras on Pierre-Firmin Martin, popularly known as *père* Martin.³⁷ According to Zola, dealers like Martin paid young or otherwise unknown artists very small sums for their paintings. Although Martin often went on to sell pictures acquired in this way to important collectors, he did so with relatively little profit to himself, and none to the artists. Martin might keep a young artist from starving, but he could do little to advance an artist's position in the profession. Martin and dealers like him conducted a trade in canvases, not careers.

Summary: The Salon system

Analytically, the distinctive features of the Salon system can be isolated by comparing the fine art industry to another creative industry, that of literature. Like painters, authors of books produce highly differentiated products. These are published and promoted by commercial companies, publicly evaluated by critics, and purchased by consumers. In nineteenth-century France, not only were there many writers, literary critics, and purchasers of books, but also many different commercial publishers. For fine art there were many painters, critics and collectors. Until the 1870s, however, there was effectively only one prestigious publisher for fine art. A painter's work could not be widely reviewed by critics, or considered for purchase by important dealers and collectors until the painter had proven himself by being admitted to the Salon, and had received at least some degree of recognition from the jury. The Salon's effective monopoly of the legitimate presentation of new art to the public gave its jury the power to determine whether an aspiring artist could have a successful career as a professional painter.

Even after it had admitted a painter by hanging his work, the Salon could provide varying degrees of support for the artist: the book publisher's advertising campaign was paralleled by the even more tangible forms of support the Salon could give a painter, including favourable hangings, medals and honorary titles. These endorsements would not only influence the amount of attention the painter's work received from critics, dealers, and collectors, but would also have a direct impact on purchases of the artist's work by the government, and on appointments

of the artist to desirable government positions. The Salon's monopoly of the legitimate public presentation of new art thus gave it almost complete control over who would be allowed to become a painter in nineteenth-century France, and a very high degree of control over the critical and commercial success that those admitted to the profession would enjoy.

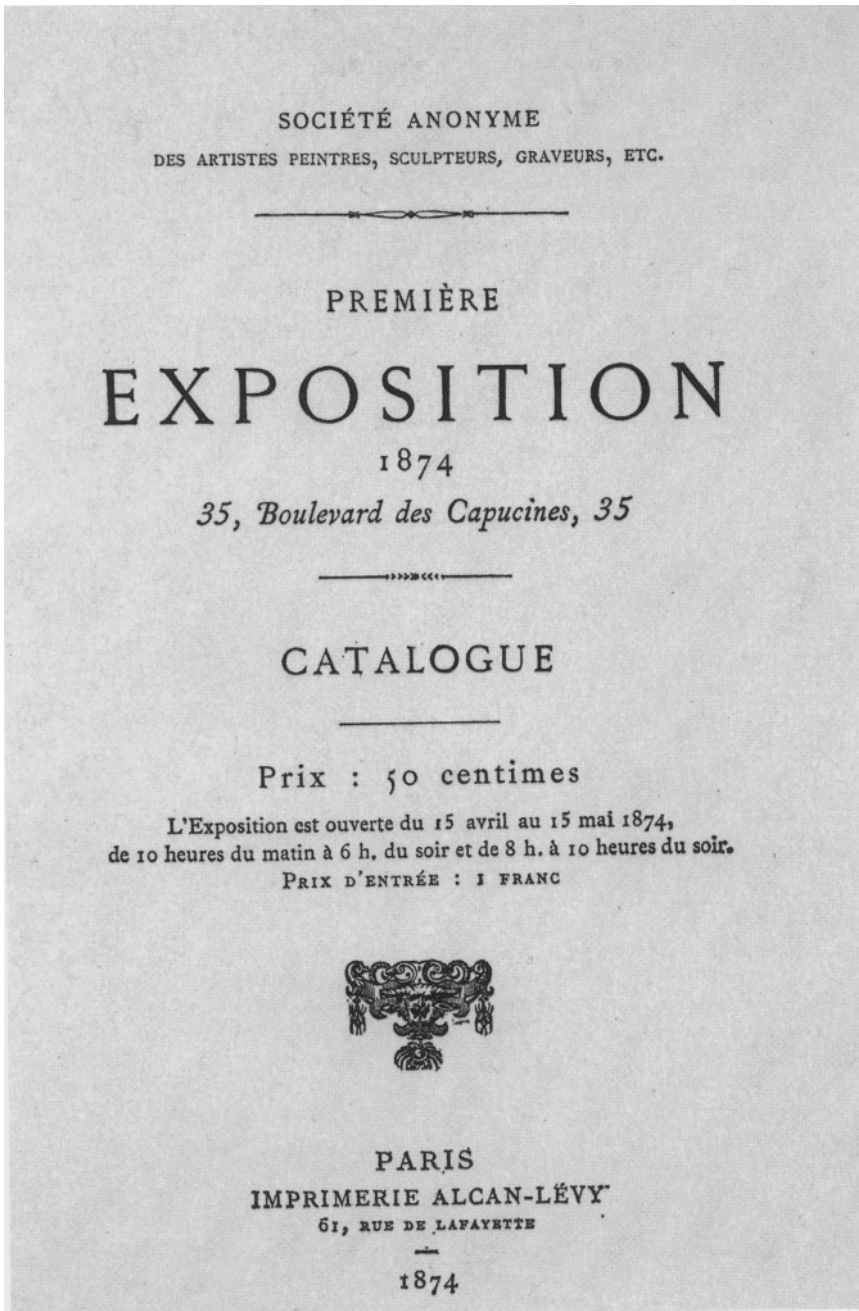
Exhibiting in the artists' salons system after 1874

Until the 1870s no alternative to the Salon was established on a continuing basis.³⁸ The impressionist shows, however, began a new era in the exhibition and promotion of art. Unlike their predecessors, the impressionist exhibitions became a significant alternative to the Salon, because it was the artists themselves who initiated them. It was artists, not dealers, who proved to be the true entrepreneurs of an emerging system of multiple salons.

The impressionists' success was possible because critics were willing to publicize the works they exhibited. The quantity of reviews was impressive in number for all eight impressionist exhibitions. The first show, in 1874, received 51 individual reviews or notices.³⁹ Later shows never received less than 44 separate notices and review articles, and the third show, in 1877, received 74. The fact that the impressionist shows, unlike dealer-sponsored exhibitions, were able to attract considerable attention from the press allowed them to become an effective rival to the Salon as a venue in which artists could present their work and have it taken seriously by the public.

An important element in the impressionists' successful challenge to the Salon's hegemony was their ability to appear independent of dealers and therefore to appear to exhibit for reasons beyond the purely commercial. Critics who reviewed their exhibitions apparently believed (or chose to ignore any evidence to the contrary) that the impressionist shows were untainted by dealer involvement. The organizers were careful never to indicate any sponsor other than the artists themselves. Profits from sales were each artist's alone, save for a contribution to underwrite exhibition costs. This evidently influenced the critics even when the impressionists exhibited in locales obviously belonging to a merchant, as they did when they showed at Nadar's recently vacated photography studio in 1874 and again at a space rented from Durand-Ruel in 1876.⁴⁰ In 1882 not even the impressionists' harshest critics mentioned Durand-Ruel's role in organizing the exhibition.

The success of the impressionist exhibitions may also have been due to the recognition that the exhibitors represented a specific kind of art, which stood in opposition to the values of the Salon leadership. When in 1879 Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), Monet, Renoir and Alfred Sisley (1839-1899) decided to try their luck



4. Catalogue of the first impressionist exhibition, 1874

Table 2. Ranking by number of reviews that specifically discuss an artist's work shown at the first impressionist exhibition.

No. of reviews	Artist	No. of reviews	Artist
18	Degas	4	Mulot-Durivage
17	Monet	4	L. Otton
16	Renoir	3	Latouche
15	Morisot	2	Bureau
13	Sisley	2	Cals
12	Pissarro	2	Levert
9	Astruc	2	Meyer
9	Rouart	2	A.Otton
8	Cézanne	2	Lepic
7	Bracquemont	1	Béliard
6	Boudin	1	Debras
6	Colin	1	de Moilins
6	Lépine	1	Guillaumin
5	de Nittis	0	Attendu
5	Brandon	0	Robert

Source: Ruth Berson (ed.), *The new painting: Impressionism 1874-1886: Documentation*, 2 vols., vol. 1: *Reviews*, San Francisco 1996, pp. 9-43.

The reviews were:

1. Ariste, 'Salon de 1874', *L'Indépendance belge* (13 June 1874)
2. Ph. Burty, 'The Paris Exhibition: Lex Impressionnistes', *The Academy* (30 May 1874)
3. E. C. 'Chronique: Beaux-Arts: Expositions de peintures modernes', *Revue de France* (April 1874)
4. Emile Cardon, 'Avant le Salon: L'Exposition des révoltés', *La Presse* (29 April 1874)
5. Etienne Carjat, 'L'Exposition du boulevard des Capucines', *Le Patriote français* (27 April 1874)
6. Castagnary, 'Exposition du boulevard des Capucines: Les Impressionnistes', *Le Siècle* (29 April 1874)
7. Ernest Chesneau, 'A côté du Salon: II. Le Plein Air: Exposition du boulevard des Capucines', *Paris-Journal* (7 May 1874)
8. E. Drumont, 'L'Exposition du boulevard des Capucines', *Le Petit Journal* (19 April 1874)
9. F. de Gantès, 'Courrier artistique: L'Exposition du boulevard', *La Semaine parisienne* (23 April 1874)
10. E. d'H., 'L'Exposition du boulevard des Capucines', *Le Rappel* (17 April 1874)
11. E. Lepelletier, 'Chronique parisienne: L'Exposition libre du boulevard des Capucines', *Le Patriote français* (19 April 1874)
12. Louis Leroy, 'L'Exposition des impressionnistes', *Le Charivari* (25 April 1874)
13. Léon de Lora, 'Petites Nouvelles artistiques: Exposition libre des peintres', *Le Gaulois* (18 April 1874)
14. C. de Malte, 'Exposition de la société anonyme des artistes peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs et lithographes', *Paris à l'eau-forte* (19 April 1874)
15. Marc de Montifaud, 'Exposition du boulevard des Capucines', *L'Artiste* (1 May 1874)
16. Henri Polday, 'Les Intransigeants', *La Renaissance littéraire et artistique* (3 May 1874)
17. [Philippe Burty], 'Chronique du jour', *La République française* (25 April 1874)
18. [Emile Zola], 'Lettre de Paris', *Le Sémaphore de Marseille* (18 April 1874)
19. Armand Silvestre, 'Chronique des beaux-arts: Physiologie du refusé - L'Exposition des révoltés', *L'Opinion nationale* (22 April 1874)
20. Pierre Véron, 'Chronique parisienne', *Le Journal amusant* (25 April 1874)

once again with the Salon juries, the furious Edgar Degas (1834-1917) stipulated that in the future exhibitors could not participate simultaneously in both shows. What was dictated by circumstances nonetheless also served to distinguish further the impressionist shows from the Salon.

The perception that the impressionists represented a 'bande' of artists in opposition to the Salon is reflected in the criticism of impressionist exhibitions. Reviewers demonstrated a striking ability to distinguish the core impressionists from the many fellow travellers whom the organizers enlisted to help give credibility to their shows. Even at the first show, as Table 2 demonstrates, most critics were able to distinguish the major impressionists from the rest. Twenty reviews singled out individual artists and works of art (as opposed to listing merely their names). Of the 30 artists who participated Degas was mentioned in 18 reviews, followed by Monet with 17, Renoir with 16, Berthe Morisot (1841-1895) with 15, Sisley with 13 and Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) with 12 reviews. No other artist was mentioned more than 9 times. Moreover, almost all of these critics perceived the impressionists to be doing something new. Whether critics held their innovations to be good or bad subsequently proved to be unimportant. What was important was that critics described the impressionists' work as a unified challenge to the tastes represented by the Salon jury.

A third factor behind the impressionists' success was the diminished authority of the Academy, which had not only permanently lost control over the Salon's juries in 1863, but had also lost control over the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*.⁴¹ Even as the Academy was pushed into the background, the government, which under Napoleon III had been actively engaged in controlling and promoting the visual arts, became under the Third Republic increasingly willing to grant artists complete control over the Salon and art instruction. Whereas in the past the legitimacy of the Salon jury's decisions had been backed by the outside authority of the Academy and/or the state, now its juries were publicly perceived to represent only the interests of the exhibiting artists, not some ideal standard set by the Academy or state policy. The impressionists were the first artists to avail themselves of these altered circumstances and to set themselves up as a distinct faction within the Parisian art community.

In 1874, the impressionists had yet to prove not only the value of their art but also the value of the independent group exhibition. We would not minimize the hardships the impressionists subsequently endured. Only Pissarro, significantly, exhibited in all eight shows; Monet participated in only five, and Renoir just four. Most participants continued to seek exhibition opportunities elsewhere, both official and unofficial. But neither should we exaggerate the lack of success that greeted their innovations, particularly when it comes to the critical reception of their work.⁴² Today it is widely recognized that, although there was some negative criticism, a majority of critics viewed the exhibition favourably. These

friendly critics frequently contrasted the impressionist show with the perceived weaknesses of the Salon. The second impressionist exhibition, which was held in 1876, cemented the institutional achievement of the first show. It was even more widely reviewed, and serious critics began to formulate the aesthetic ambitions of the movement. The impressionists' ability to stage six more shows, stretching over another ten years, demonstrated the viability of alternative, artist-run exhibition societies.

The small size of the impressionist exhibitions allowed its participants to display their work in a dramatically different fashion than at the Salon.⁴³ Their first catalogue listed 165 works by thirty artists. By comparison, at the Salon of 1874 visitors encountered 3,657 paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs and architectural models. Not only was it physically easier to take in the entire exhibition, the artists could show more work: in 1874 Degas exhibited 10 paintings, Monet 12 pictures, and Pissarro 5. At later impressionist exhibitions the collection of works by the leading artists grew considerably larger, so that in 1877, for example, Degas showed 25 pictures, Monet 29, and Pissarro 22. Again, by comparison, at the Salon, depending on that year's regulations, even a celebrated Salon artist might be able to exhibit no more than two works. Less well known artists were fortunate to exhibit a single work at any of the Salons. The idea of exhibiting large collections by a single artist was not new with the impressionist exhibitions, yet nothing on this scale was possible at the Salon, nor was it customary for artists to have large bodies of their work periodically available for public review. Nor, finally, had any artist who lacked medals and state honours had such significant collections of their work reviewed by so many critics.

Through their exhibitions the core impressionists became by the early 1880s prominent fixtures in the Paris art world. Moreover, they were able to confer legitimacy on younger artists who exhibited with them. Gauguin, for example, showed with the impressionists five times beginning in 1879 – which led Durand-Ruel to buy a number of the artist's early paintings. Similarly, Seurat's exhibition of *La Grande Jatte* at the last impressionist exhibition in 1886 aroused considerable controversy, while simultaneously placing Seurat at the head of the next generation of advanced painters in Paris.

The impressionists' group exhibitions were so successful that by the early 1880s they had inspired a number of similar enterprises. As one critic ironically remarked in his review of the impressionist exhibition in 1882, 'Paris, in sum, is at the moment swarming in small expositions, of *small salons*, as one says: the exposition of watercolorists, the exposition of the rue Volney, the exposition of the Mirlitons, the exposition of women artists, the exposition of Russian painters, the exposition of the *cercle des arts libéraux*, etc., etc.'⁴⁴ None of these 'salons', however, produced a single major artist. They were viewed, therefore, largely as extensions of, rather than alternatives to, the official Salon.

Only one other salon during the 1880s played a role comparable to that of the impressionists, the one organized by the Société des Artistes Indépendants.⁴⁵ Their salon was considerably larger than the impressionist exhibitions and, despite the prominence of neo-impressionist painters, more aesthetically diverse. The participating artists also ranged from barely skilled amateurs to some of the most innovative painters of the day. But, like the impressionist exhibitions, the Indépendants' importance is directly related to the prominence of the innovative artists who showed at their salons. Seurat, Paul Signac (1863-1935), and Odilon Redon (1840-1916) were clearly leading artists within the Parisian community interested in advanced art. And, as was the case with the impressionist exhibitions, the Indépendants survived because the press showed itself willing to review their shows.⁴⁶

According to the Whites, 'the Impressionist group shows [...] soon withered in favor of one-man shows.'⁴⁷ As far as the capacity to create reputations for aspiring artists is concerned, this is clearly not true. Until the twentieth century, for young or unrecognized artists in Paris the commercial gallery show devoted to a single artist was not even an option. As far as we have been able to determine from the secondary literature, only one major French artist born in the nineteenth century had a solo exhibition among his first three documented shows; this was Jean Fautrier, who was born in 1898. Solo shows in commercial galleries did become more frequent from the 1880s forward, but they remained ineffectual means through which artists could build careers. Important French artists continued to make their debuts via group exhibitions until at least the beginning of the 1920s.

The critics' share in promoting modern art

The Whites contend that the role of critics expanded as the Academic system gave way to a new order. Critics' ability to publicize art grew in importance: 'The laudatory review became a substitute for a Salon medal.'⁴⁸ Critics replaced the Salon jury as arbiters of taste: 'In the Academic system, painters themselves had been propounders and enforcers of formal theory. Now this role passed to the critics as the new system developed.'⁴⁹ And the critics became ideologues of innovative art: 'Exclusion from the Salon not only made a painter a figure of interest to readers; it became, in articles by favorable critics, a positive reason for the artist's greatness.'⁵⁰

To the extent that critics attempted to publicize artistic innovators in order to increase sales of their work, they must be judged largely a failure. Whether we consider the art of the impressionists or that of the leaders of the next generation, advanced art simply did not sell well in nineteenth-century Paris. The fortunes of Monet and his friends in the 1870s and 1880s, and that of Gauguin and Cézanne

in the 1890s, lagged far behind the considerable successes of the leading artists still showing at the Salon.

Some critics did play an important role in the artists' salons system, but their primary impact was in the intellectual market for artistic ideas rather than in the economic market for paintings. Under the Salon system, most critics simply reacted to the judgements of the Salon juries. Whether they agreed or disagreed with the jury, the Salon furnished their most important subject matter. With the declining prestige of these juries under the artists' salons system, some critics perceived new opportunities to exert an influence over contemporary art.

The most notable example of prescriptive art criticism must be that of Charles Baudelaire. His essay 'The painter of modern life' (1863) not only instructed artists as to what subjects they should paint, but gave strong hints about the new methods they should use in the process. Baudelaire's challenge appears to have had a powerful impact on the young artists of his day, and some historians believe that it continued to influence the aesthetic agenda for advanced French art even into the early twentieth century. Although no other critic had a comparable influence on artists' practices, a few others tried, and their efforts were noted by artists. Thus, for example, when in 1890 Albert Aurier published an article praising Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) for his unique innovations in symbolism, the artist wrote to Aurier in embarrassment, pointing to the contributions of other painters. Yet Van Gogh confided to his brother in connection with Aurier's article that '... I don't paint like that, but rather I do see from it how I ought to paint.' He recognized Aurier's real intention: 'I think that basically the writer writes it rather to guide not only me but also the other Impressionists ...'⁵¹

Few critics directly influenced artists' methods, but a number made a contribution to advanced art by encouraging young painters and supporting them within Paris's contentious world of advanced art. A number of accomplished men of letters took up the cause of Manet and the impressionists, as at various times Emile Zola, Edmond Duranty, Théodore Duret and Stéphane Mallarmé declared them to be the most important painters working in France.⁵² Félix Fénéon did the same for Seurat and the neo-impressionists in the 1880s, and Aurier similarly championed Van Gogh, Gauguin, and other symbolists in the 1890s. Although these artists set their own artistic courses, they clearly appreciated the support of such intelligent and distinguished critics. And some of the artists regarded the critics' work as serious contributions to artistic debates. So, for example, in 1888 Signac was angered by the claim of critic Arsène Alexandre that Seurat saw his 'paternity of the theory' of neo-impressionism questioned by 'unscrupulous comrades'.⁵³ Signac demanded an explanation from his friend Seurat, which the latter provided, denying responsibility for the insult. Yet in his response Seurat provided additional evidence of the significance of critical writing, noting, 'I still consider Fénéon's pamphlet [of 1886] as the exposition of my ideas on painting.'⁵⁴

Since none of the painters in Paris's advanced art world were enjoying great financial success in 1888, the exchange between Signac and Seurat suggests that their interest in critics' writings stemmed from their concern that the public should have an accurate perception of their intellectual positions, rather than from their economic status.

In tracing the close relationships between advanced artists and critics throughout the late nineteenth century, it is important to recognize that the involvement of critics in artistic debates consistently pre-dated dealer involvement in promoting the art under review. Unlike the journalists who wrote for newspapers or other periodicals, or the critics who served dealers, the critics closest to the innovative art of the day were men of letters. They wrote art criticism only on occasion, and often published even their most important essays in obscure or foreign journals or newspapers. The criticism of these men of letters differed considerably in quality, and usually in length, from that of the professional art critics; the latter's work was more widely available to the public at large, but also more ephemeral. The most significant essays of the men of letters reached only limited audiences. Thus while the writings of Mallarmé and Duranty subsequently came to shape the modern reading of impressionism, and Fénéon that of neo-impressionism, at the time they were first published they effectively promoted their artists only within Paris's élite cultural circles of those already interested in innovative art. But in applying their considerable talents to articulate and praise the achievements of these early schools of modern art, they and a few other critics gave moral support to these new movements, which helped to strengthen the resolve of the handful of innovative artists who led them.

Selling advanced art

The emerging system of artists' salons inaugurated by the impressionist shows was a far less economically secure environment for artists whose reputations depended on them than the state-financed Salon had been. The Whites argue that under the 'dealer-critic system' there arose 'a few competing nuclei' of dealers 'stable enough to serve as effective substitutes for government patronage'.⁵⁵ In reality, the competition to which they refer came so late in the century, involved so few dealers, and worked on behalf of so few artists as to be insignificant as a 'system' for supporting artists' careers. Art dealers proved inadequate substitutes for state patronage.

Of all the major dealers active in the last quarter of the century, only Paul Durand-Ruel bought advanced art in quantity. Durand-Ruel is also the paragon of the Whites' dealer-system, an example of a dealer acting as a 'Renaissance-style patron', capable of supporting an artist over an entire career. Yet it appears that

Table 3. Durand-Ruel's annual purchases from Monet and Pissarro from 1871 to 1885 (in francs).

Year	Monet	Pissarro	Year	Monet	Pissarro
1871	300	400	1879	0	0
1872	9,800	5,900	1880	500	0
1873	19,100	5,300	1881	20,900	0
1874	0	2,535	1882	31,241	12,000
1875	0	1,190	1883	34,541	14,000
1876	0	0	1884	18,200	10,000
1877	0	0	1885	10,400	9,000
1878	0	0			

Sources: Daniel Wildenstein, *Monet or the triumph of impressionism*, 4 vols., Cologne 1996, vol. 1; Ralph E. Shikes and Paula Harper, *Pissarro: His life and work*, New York 1980.

Durand-Ruel bought from the impressionists primarily only during two brief and widely separated periods. Table 3 lists what Durand-Ruel paid annually to Monet and Pissarro for their paintings between 1871 and 1885 (according to published accounts).⁵⁶ The dealer first met the two artists in London in 1871. The following year Durand-Ruel purchased a large number of paintings from them both, as well as making a one-time purchase of twenty-three paintings from Manet.⁵⁷ In 1873 he bought a still larger number of pictures from Monet while giving Pissarro slightly less than the year before (generally Durand-Ruel paid Pissarro less per canvas than he did Monet). Nonetheless, Durand-Ruel's aggressive acquisitions ceased after 1873 and did not resume until the beginning of the 1880s.⁵⁸ During the most important period of the impressionists' struggle to leave the Salon behind, they could not look to Durand-Ruel for significant financial assistance.

After the impressionists had won substantial reputations at their independent exhibitions, Durand-Ruel again began to buy their work in quantity. Between 1882 and 1884 he purchased large numbers of paintings from Monet and Pissarro, as well as from Renoir and Sisley, and probably Degas.⁵⁹ The secondary literature offers only a fragmentary accounting of Durand-Ruel's direct purchases from the impressionists in the second half of the 1880s, yet it appears that the dealer's payments to the artists annually declined from 1884 to the end of the decade.⁶⁰ In Pissarro's case the decline was precipitous.⁶¹ Between 1887 and 1890, the dealer bought paintings from the artist at the rate of less than a thousand francs per year. Only after 1890 did the Galerie Durand-Ruel begin again to purchase from the impressionists in quantity.

Durand-Ruel consequently did not provide effective, continuous support for his artists, especially compared to Goupil's activities on behalf of Salon-certified painters such as Bouguereau and Léon Gérôme (1824-1904).⁶² His effectiveness



5. Paul Durand-Ruel, photograph by Dornac, c. 1910, Document Archives Durand-Ruel, Paris

as a promoter of the impressionists was similarly limited. Anne Distel has identified just over two dozen collectors who bought paintings by the impressionists in Paris during the 1870s and early 1880s.⁶³ Of these only two – the singer Jean-Baptiste Faure and the merchant Ernest Hoschedé – appear to have become acquainted with the work of the impressionists through Durand-Ruel. Most of the others bought directly from the artists' studios, having met the painters through other artists or writers. One important collector, the engineer Henri Rouart, was a schoolmate of Degas, another, the publisher Georges Charpentier, met the impressionists through Zola. And, of course, the painter Gustave Caillebotte (1848-1894) played an essential role in bankrolling the impressionist exhibitions and buying his fellow artists' work.

Similarly, Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) was instrumental in bring American collectors to impressionism.⁶⁴ Writers who have praised Durand-Ruel's advocacy of the impressionist cause have tended to single out his role in opening the American market for their art as his crowning achievement.⁶⁵ We do not know precisely how many American collectors made their first purchases of impressionist pictures from Durand-Ruel's American exhibitions and New York gallery, but we do

know that Cassatt, prior to Durand-Ruel's New York venture, had already found a small number of American collectors for the impressionists, composed of family members and their friends. Then, beginning around 1889, Cassatt developed the collecting tastes of Louisine and Henry Havemeyer of New York and the Potter Palmers of Chicago, helping to shape the two largest collections of impressionism in America. Durand-Ruel, then, stimulated but did not create the American market for impressionism, and it is quite possible that the Americans would have begun buying the impressionists without the dealer's intervention.

Returning to the Whites' assertion that in the 1880s artists were now able to take advantage of 'competing nuclei' of dealers, the record actually shows that during the eighties only Monet was in a position to play one dealer against another, and only with limited success. In the early 1880s, while Durand-Ruel was acquiring large numbers of Monet's paintings from the artist, Georges Petit, the dealer's principal rival, had bought at most only a handful of Monet's pictures. Even in 1885, after having shown in Petit's gallery for two years, Monet was still forced to depend on Durand-Ruel for purchases, because, according to Daniel Wildenstein, 'no other prospect presented itself. Certainly Petit, who had bought a picture during the International Exhibition, was taking his time paying for it. Durand-Ruel thus remained Monet's confidant for better and for worse ...'⁶⁶ Theo van Gogh, the artist's brother and now the business manager for a branch of Boussod et Valadon, acquired fourteen paintings from Monet in 1887, making him the first dealer besides Durand-Ruel to make such significant acquisitions directly from an impressionist painter.⁶⁷ But rather than competing with Durand-Ruel, Van Gogh appears to have largely replaced the older dealer as the principal buyer of Monet's canvases. And even if Monet fared comparatively better with dealers than had most of his friends in the second half of the 1880s, it was because he had become significantly more popular with collectors than had his colleagues. Pissarro was still complaining in 1891 about the lack of competition between dealers: 'At Boussod & Valadon's they soft-soap me and talk against Durand. If I go to Durand's they become furious, and if I go to Boussod's, Durand is no less furious; in short: neither will buy my work. If anyone else were available, I would unhesitatingly turn to him, but there is nobody.'⁶⁸

The leading galleries were generally indifferent to the new generation of artists, painters such as Gauguin, Signac and Seurat, whom the Whites assert also took advantage of the competition among dealers.⁶⁹ Until Ambroise Vollard arrived on the scene in the mid-1890s, no dealer made significant sales of works by any post-impressionist painter. Younger artists continued to make their debuts in group shows and hoped that the reputations won there, and subsequent collector interest, would arouse the support of a dealer, but never in the nineteenth century would dealers introduce and promote the reputation of an unknown artist who later became canonical.⁷⁰

The system of artists' salons

The critical change that the impressionists initiated in 1874 was to break the Salon's monopoly of the ability to present fine art in a public setting that critics and the public would accept as legitimate. The impressionists were the first nineteenth-century painters to become leaders in the Paris art world without having received medals and other honours from the official Salon. Increasingly, critics showed themselves willing to devote attention to exhibitions sponsored by groups of artists, even if they lacked the official sanction of the state or any of its institutions. The reputations of the impressionists quickly became established in the advanced art world, and the demand for their work gradually grew among collectors with ties to that community.

The roles of dealers changed little in the decades after 1874. As had been true earlier in the century, dealers remained unable successfully to create reputations and markets for young unknown painters. As before, dealers primarily restricted their activity to exhibiting and selling the work of artists whose reputations had already been established, and whose work was already in demand by collectors. The Whites contend that in this period 'the dealer [...] was able to offer [artists] a ready-made clientele and to personally influence its taste,' and that consequently 'a contract with the dealer, or at least a fairly steady system for loans and advances, guaranteed the painter a minimum income.'⁷¹ In their view Durand-Ruel pioneered this arrangement: the artist 'wanted above all a predictable income. [...] This was the carrot Durand-Ruel wielded with such success that other dealers followed.'⁷² Yet in fact no dealer offered advanced artists a ready-made clientele, and no dealer, including Durand-Ruel, provided a guaranteed minimum income to any artist whose work was not already in demand from collectors. Durand-Ruel deserves credit for being the first dealer to recognize the importance of the impressionists, but he did not become a consistent source of financial support for these artists, nor was he the first dealer to make large-scale investments in the work of individual artists. Contrary to the Whites' portrayal, dealers were not leaders in the development of modern art and its markets in the late nineteenth century, but remained followers. They played their role only after talented painters had created the new art, and sophisticated critics had analyzed it, and a body of collectors had come to buy it.

In the last quarter of the century a number of ambitious young artists decided not to seek the honours offered by the official Salon and the financial rewards that typically accompanied them. Some of these artists regarded their defection from the Salon as a temporary expedient, while others came to see it as a permanent strategy, but whatever their intention this decision invariably resulted in an extended period of economic uncertainty. Outside the Salon system no young advanced painter found sufficient patronage, from either dealers or collectors, to

earn a stable income sufficient to allow him to develop his art without severe economic hardships.

No dealer could or would support a young innovative artist in the absence of a steady demand by collectors for his work, and no dealer by himself could readily find the collectors who could create this demand. The market for advanced art remained too limited to provide a secure livelihood for any but the most established painters: collectors' understanding of the principle that important art would be innovative was not yet sufficiently widespread to create large-scale demand for the work of young artists. The art of the impressionists began to sell in the late nineteenth century, but neither they nor any advanced artist of the next generation would gain consistent economic success until he had established his importance in the art world's intellectual market over a period of at least a decade, and often considerably more.

Conclusion

In view of the substantial number of issues treated here, it is perhaps worth summarizing what our principal specific disagreements with *Canvases and careers* are:

1. 'The Academic system emphasized individual canvases rather than the careers of painters.'⁷³ The Salon system in fact supported the entire *careers* of favoured artists.

2. 'Pressure from the greatly expanded number of professional painters on an organizational and economic framework conceived to handle a few hundred men was the driving force toward institutional change.'⁷⁴ The Salon system was not brought down by masses of artists, but by a few key individuals who demonstrated that its monopoly as a legitimate showcase for fine art could be challenged successfully.⁷⁵

3. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of a new system: 'Dealers and critics [...] recognized the dominant tastes of the art market. [...] Essential to success for the new system were the tactical skills of dealers and critics in exploiting situational advantages.'⁷⁶ The true entrepreneurs of the multiple salons system were in fact artists. Commercial success came only after these artists had achieved success in the intellectual world of advanced art. Dealers in the late nineteenth century overwhelmingly continued to do what they had done earlier: exhibit and sell the work of artists whose reputations had already been established at group shows.

4. 'Through dealer-patrons the free market was coagulated into a few competing nuclei, stable enough to serve as effective substitutes for government patronage.'⁷⁷ During the nineteenth century only a few successful artists benefited from

competition among dealers – many fewer than had enjoyed government patronage under the Salon system.

5. '[The dealer-critic system] provided more widely and generously for a larger number of artists and particularly for the young untried painter than did the Academic arrangements. [...] Gauguin, Signac, and Seurat had been nurtured in the Impressionists' world of café discussions, joint learning and experimentation, group exhibition and dealer competition.'⁷⁸ Dealers did not support young untried painters during the late nineteenth century; they rarely even showed their work. Gauguin, Signac and Seurat never received a large or steady income from dealers in the nineteenth century. For most artists, the system of multiple salons was a series of episodes, based on periodic group exhibitions, and consequently focused on individual *canvases* rather than careers.

We believe that the Whites' analysis credits the wrong people for changing the art world in the nineteenth century and overstates the improvement in the position of advanced artists attributed to that change. Although they cannot have foreseen the full impact of their actions at the time, what the impressionists set in motion in 1874 was no less than the destruction of the Academy's effective monopoly of the market for advanced art. As a result of this, in future there would never again be a single arbiter determining who would be eligible to earn a living as a fine artist. In time, the Academy's monopoly would be replaced by competition among dealers, but this did not happen immediately. Instead the impressionists' exhibition in 1874 inaugurated a transitional period during which artists' group exhibitions would become the venues for the legitimate presentation of innovative art to the public. The consequences of the impressionists' actions for the development of modern art can hardly be overstated. Importance in modern art depends on innovation. After 1874, no single authority would ever again have effective control over which innovations could gain acceptance in the art world.

NOTES

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1. Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and careers: Institutional change in the French painting world*, rev. ed., Chicago & London 1993. A French edition appeared in 1991.
2. See, for example, Alain Bonnet, 'Les portraits d'artistes en groupe', in *Face à face: Portraits d'artistes dans les collections publiques d'Ile-de-France*, Paris 1998, p. 107 n. 18; Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth-century European art*, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2002, p. 399; T. J. Clark, *The painting of modern life*, Princeton 1984, p. 260; David Cottingham, *Cubism in the shadow of war*, New Haven 1998, p. 37; Michael C. FitzGerald, *Making modernism: Picasso and the creation of the market for twentieth-century art*, New York 1995, p. 7; Dario Gamboni, 'Critics on criticism: A critical approach', in Malcolm Gee (ed.), *Art criticism since 1900*, Manchester 1993, p. 40; Nicholas Green, 'Circuits of production, circuits of consumption: The case of mid-nineteenth-century French art dealing', *Art Journal* 48, no. 1 (spring 1989), pp. 29, 33 n. 6; John House, *Monet*, New Haven 1986, p. 234 n. 25; Patricia Mainardi, *The end of the Salon: Art and the state in the early Third Republic*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 129, 186 n. 1; Philip Nord, *Impressionists and politics*, London 2000, pp. 71, 118; John O'Brian, *Ruthless hedonism*, Chicago 1999, pp. 12, 41-42, 105; James Rubin, *Impressionism*, London 1999, pp. 331, 440; Juliet Simpson, 'The Société Nationale: The politics of innovation in late nineteenth-century France', *Apollo* 149, no. 444 (February 1999), p. 54 n. 2; and Martha Ward, *Pissarro, neo-impressionism, and the spaces of the avant-garde*, Chicago 1996, p. 4.
3. White and White, *Canvases and careers*, pp. 88, 155.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Mainardi, *The end of the Salon*, describes the end of the Academy's control over the Salon rather than the institution's demise, which, as she herself observes, survived well after the handing over of the Salon to the community of artists after 1880. Mainardi's narrative is about the official response to the demands of the artist community for reform and inclusiveness, rather than how careers were to be made in public and private exhibition institutions. In the end we would argue that state policy had little to do with the collapse of the Salon system.
13. For a further discussion of the centralization characteristic of the French art institutions and its ability to control the display and publishing of works of art, see Robert Jensen, *Marketing modernism in fin-de-siècle Europe*, Princeton 1994, pp. 22ff.
14. *Letters of Gustave Courbet*, ed. Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, Chicago 1992, p. 70.
15. Gauguin and Seurat both made initial attempts to build their reputations through the Salon. Gauguin showed a painting at the Salon of 1876, and Seurat had a drawing accepted at the Salon of 1883. Gauguin would never subsequently participate in a Salon exhibition, and after Seurat's *Une baignade* was rejected by the Salon jury of 1884 he never again attempted to show there.
16. Mainardi, *The end of the Salon*, pp. 18-19.
17. The 38 artists included in Table 1 represent all or almost all of the most highly decorated French artists in the nineteenth-century Salon system; 24 of these eventually became members of the Institut. For sake of comparison, Table 1 also includes a number of painters whose subsequent fame has been much greater than their success at the Salon, such as Millet and Courbet.
18. See the essay 'Manet and the institutionalization of Anomie', in Pierre Bourdieu, *The field of cultural production*, New York 1993, p. 242.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 243.
20. The privileges of medal winners underwent frequent revision throughout the century, but under every administration they enjoyed a

special status. For the changing Salon rules, see Clara Stranahan, *A history of French painting*, New York 1893.

21. It was not, however, until the Third Republic that Salon rules stipulated artists could qualify for a higher medal only after earning the medal beneath it.

22. *The Journal of Eugene Delacroix*, trans. Walter Pach, New York 1972, p. 322.

23. Once acquired, a critical reputation won at the Salon could survive even an artist's subsequent rejection by ideologically motivated Salon juries. Paul Durand-Ruel recalled how his father discovered the commercial potential of artists such as Théodore Rousseau, who was a recipient of extensive critical attention early in his career, yet later had his submissions refused by Academy-controlled juries. See Paul Durand-Ruel, 'Mémoires', in Lionello Venturi (ed.), *Les archives de l'impressionnisme*, 2 vols., Paris & New York 1939, vol. 2, p. 163.

24. In *Manet and his critics*, New York 1969, p. 107, George Heard Hamilton noted that none of the major periodicals reviewed Manet's exhibition except the *Journal amusant*, which devoted three pages of caricatures to the show. Hamilton concluded that this was because 'the public was convinced that the paintings were worthless'. Yet Hamilton's observation does not agree with the fact that Manet's pictures at subsequent Salons were often extensively discussed.

25. Ernest Chesneau, 'Le Japonisme dans les arts', *Musée Universel* 2 (1873), pp. 214-17. According to Geneviève Lacambre, 'Whistler and France', in exhib. cat. *James McNeill Whistler*, London (Tate Gallery) 1994, p. 45, Whistler regarded the Durand-Ruel show as such a failure that he chose not to exhibit in Paris again for another nine years. Notably, when he showed again, it was at the Salon of 1882.

26. The Goupil publishing house, for example, annually published during the late 1880s and early 1890s lavishly illustrated volumes, written by famous French critics, which were reprinted in English translations. For example, see Georges Lafenestre, *The Salon of 1889*, trans. Henry Bacon, Paris & Boston c. 1889.

27. Cited in John Rewald, *The history of impressionism*, 4th rev. ed., New York 1973, p. 217.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

29. In 1873, the state published a new regulation

for the Salon to the effect that 'Quand le travail du placement sera terminé, le jury tout entier sera invité à donner son avis sur les dispositions générales ou particulières, mais pendant les travaux du placement, les portes seront fermées à tout le monde sans exemption.' The critic who reported this news concluded gladly that 'Enfin! on ne verra plus MM. les membres du jury promener leurs œuvres de panneau en panneau et de salle en salle, jusqu'à ce qu'il reste à peine le temps matériel d'accrocher les communales admis.' See Ernest Fillonneau, 'Exposition National', *Moniteur des Arts*, 16 (January 24, 1873), [p. 2].

30. The diaries of the American art agent George Lucas indicate how important studio visits could be for artists. During the 1860s, Lucas records having visited the studios of 79 artists, sometimes repeatedly, often either buying or commissioning works from the artist. Yet 52 of these artists are not mentioned in the diaries in connection with art dealers with whom Lucas did business. See *The diary of George A. Lucas, an American art agent in Paris, 1857-1909*, 2 vols., ed. Lilian M.C. Randall, Princeton 1979.

31. See, for example, Philippe Burty, 'L'hôtel des ventes et le commerce des tableaux', in *Paris guide par les principaux écrivains et artistes de la France*, 2 vols., Paris 1867, vol. 2, p. 963, where the critic distinguishes strongly between the trade in 'tableaux anciens' and 'tableaux modernes'.

32. Frédéric Henriot, 'Le Musée des rues', *L'Artiste*, series 5, vol. 8, no. 8 and no. 9 (15 November and 1 December 1854): pp. 113-15, 133-35; Théophile Gautier, 'La rue Laffitte', *L'Artiste*, series 7, vol. 3, no. 1 (January 3, 1858): pp. 10-13; E. de Lépine, 'L'Art dans la rue', *L'Artiste*, series 7, vol. 9, no. 2 (1 February, 1860): pp. 37-40.

33. A. Boime, 'Entrepreneurial patronage in nineteenth-century France', in *Enterprise and entrepreneurs in nineteenth- and twentieth-century France*, ed. E. C. Carter II, R. Forster and J. N. Moody, Baltimore 1976, pp. 137-207. Boime, however, also accepts uncritically the Whites' discussion of the role of dealers in the Parisian art world.

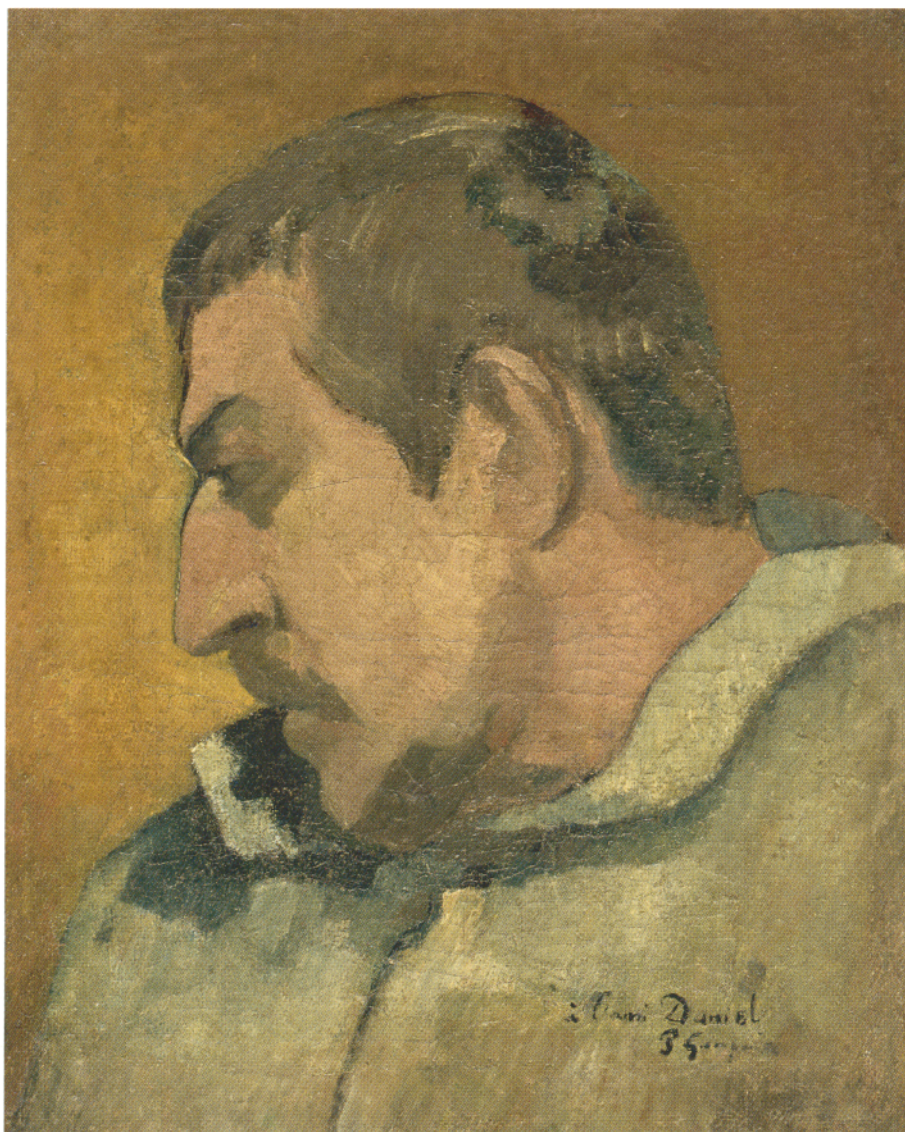
34. The Goupil stockbooks are preserved in Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, The Getty, Los Angeles.

35. Boime, 'Entrepreneurial patronage', p. 103.

36. See Randall's 'Introduction' to *The Diary of George A. Lucas*, vol. 1, p. 17.
37. See Emile Zola, 'Ébauche' for *L'œuvre*, reprinted in *Les œuvres complètes*, vol. 31, Paris, 1928, pp. 409-17, in which he describes the various classes of dealers to be encountered in Paris in the 1880s.
38. See William Hauptmann, 'Juries, Protests, and Counter-Exhibitions Before 1850', *Art Bulletin* 67, no. 1 (March 1985), pp. 95-109; and Richard Wrigley, *The origins of French art criticism*, Oxford 1995, esp. chapter 1, 'The Salon in Context'.
39. See Ruth Berson (ed.), *The new painting: Impressionism 1874-1886: Documentation*, 2 vols., vol. 1: *Reviews*, San Francisco 1996. By notices, we mean published announcements that the exhibition was taking place, often listing a number of the important artists by name. Review articles actually discuss individual artists and their work.
40. See Rewald, *History of impressionism*, pp. 313 and 373. Incidentally, Durand-Ruel did nothing to support the exhibition in 1876, taking half the rent in cash up front and making up the other half in ticket receipts. Richard Brettell, 'The "first" exhibition of impressionist painters', in Charles S. Moffett *et al.*, exhib. cat. *The new painting: Impressionism, 1874-1886*, San Francisco (Fine Arts Museums) & Washington (National Gallery of Art) 1986, p. 191, assumes that first Nadar and then Durand-Ruel would have handled 'security, admissions, and sales'. However, there appears to be no actual record either supporting or refuting Brettell's assertion.
41. See Stranahan, *History of French painting*, pp. 266-69, for her discussion of Napoleon III's reforms.
42. John Rewald, *History of impressionism*, p. 318, suggested: 'From the beginning the exhibition seems to have been well attended, but the public went there mainly to laugh. Someone invented a joke to the effect that these painters' method consisted in loading a pistol with several tubes of paint and firing at a canvas, then finishing off the work with a signature. The critics were either extremely harsh in their comments or simply refused to consider the show seriously.' Compare this with Paul Tucker's discussion of the mixed critical reception in 'The first impressionist exhibition in context', in exhib. cat. *The new painting*, pp. 106-9.
43. See Martha Ward, 'Impressionist installations and private exhibitions', *Art Bulletin* 73, no. 4 (December 1991), pp. 599-622 for a discussion of the physical appearance of the impressionist installations and their relationship to the general trend during the 1870s and 1880s to make the small independent show an attractive and more exclusive alternative to the Salon. In comparing the impressionist shows to those held by 'art circles' and art dealers, however, Ward does not take into account the failure of these latter venues to launch the careers of significant artists.
44. 'Gérôme', 'Courrier de Paris: L'Exposition des peintres indépendants', *L'Univers illustré*, 18 March 1882, p. 163, reprinted in Berson, *The new painting*, vol. 1, pp. 389-90.
45. See Pierre Angrand, *Naissance des artistes indépendants 1884*, Paris 1965.
46. Initially the Indépendants exhibitions were not reviewed in anything like the numbers the impressionist exhibitions received. Yet the reviews were still significant, both in number and in the importance of the critics who reviewed them. Based on the bibliography of contemporary criticism cited by Henri Dorra and John Rewald in *Seurat*, Paris 1959, there were at least three reviews by Paris periodicals of the first exhibition, most notably by Roger Marx in *Voltaire*. The second exhibition in December 1884 received at least five. The next exhibition of the Indépendants in 1886 received eight or more. As in the case of the impressionist exhibitions, the artists we remember today tended to stand out from the mass of exhibitors.
47. White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, p. 99.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
51. Letter 851 (625), 2 February 1890.
52. See Emile Zola, 'Mon Salon', (1868); reprinted in *Mon Salon, Manet, écrits sur l'art*, Paris 1970, pp. 45-89; Théodore Duret, 'Les peintres impressionnistes' (1878), reprinted in *Critique d'avant-garde*, Paris 1885, pp. 64-69; Stéphane Mallarmé, 'The impressionists and Edouard Manet' (1876), reprinted in exhib. cat. *The new painting*, pp. 27-35; Edmond Duranty, 'The new painting' (1876), reprinted in exhib. cat. *The new painting*, pp. 37-49.
53. Norma Broude, ed., *Seurat in Perspective*, Englewood Cliffs 1978), p. 105.

54. Ibid.
55. White and White, *Canvases and Careers*, p. 128.
56. Considering the quantity of research carried out regarding the respective careers of the impressionists, it is surprising that so little data about their sales has been published. Table 3 therefore is only a provisional account, based on current published information.
57. For a discussion of Durand-Ruel's purchases of Manet, see Anthea Callen, 'Faure and Manet', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 83, March 1974, pp. 157-78. For his acquisitions of the impressionists during 1872-73, see Ralph E. Shikes and Paula Harper, *Pissarro: His life and work*, New York 1980, pp. 105ff.; and Daniel Wildenstein, *Monet or the triumph of impressionism*, 4 vols., Cologne 1996, vol. 1, pp. 92-100.
58. Durand-Ruel continued to buy from Pissarro, but in markedly diminished numbers, which ended finally in 1875. Renoir, in whom Durand-Ruel had previously shown little interest prior to 1875, benefited from a spate of purchases by the dealer by the end of 1876. According to Anne Distel, Durand-Ruel acquired some fifteen canvases. Significantly, however, the only paintings that may be identified with certainty were 'those that he sold to Count Armand Doria in July 1876, which reappeared on the market when Doria's collection was auctioned in 1899.' See Distel, 'Renoir's Collectors: the pâtissier, the priest and the prince', in exhib. cat., *Renoir*, London (Hayward Gallery) & Boston (Museum of Fine Arts) 1980, p. 21.
59. The scholarly literature on Degas provides little indication of the quantity of Durand-Ruel's purchases from the artist at any period in his career.
60. It was at this time that Theo van Gogh was able to make substantial inroads into Durand-Ruel's business relationship with Monet. In 1888, for example, Van Gogh purchased 23,450 francs worth of pictures from the artist, whereas Durand-Ruel appears to have bought very little. See Wildenstein's discussion of Monet's dealings with Durand-Ruel, Petit and Van Gogh in the 1880s in *Monet or the triumph of impressionism*, vol. 1, pp. 206ff.
61. On Durand-Ruel's declining purchases of Pissarro's pictures, see Shikes and Harper, *Pissarro*, pp. 181ff.
62. In the early 1880s the average Goupil sales price for a Bouguereau painting was over 17,000 francs; Gérôme's paintings sold for the average price of 21,855 francs. Between September 1879 and September 1882 Goupil sold 31 paintings by Gérôme for a total of 677,500 francs and 43 Bouguereaus for 735,374 francs. The impressionists' sales figures are negligible by comparison. These figures are derived from a survey of Goupil's stockbooks housed in the Getty Research Institute library, Los Angeles.
63. Anne Distel, *Impressionism: The first collectors*, trans. Barbara Perroud-Benson, New York 1990, pp. 56ff.
64. On Cassatt and the first American collectors, see Frances Weitzenhoffer, *The Havemeyers: Impressionism comes to America*, New York 1986.
65. The 'rescue' of impressionism by the opening of the American market is an idea that first appeared in early twentieth-century literature on Durand-Ruel. See, for example, the essays by Arsène Alexandre, 'Paul Durand-Ruel: Bild und Geschichte eines Kunsthändlers', *Pan* 2, no. 4 (November 1911), p. 120; and Julius Elias, 'Paul Durand-Ruel: Aus dem Leben eines modernen Kunsthändlers', *Kunst und Künstler* 10, no. 2 (November 1911): p. 107.
66. Wildenstein, *Monet or the triumph of impressionism*, vol. 1, p. 206.
67. Van Gogh's activities on behalf of Monet (and to a much smaller degree, the other impressionists) is well documented in John Rewald's 'Theo van Gogh, Goupil, and the impressionists', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 81 (January 1973): pp. 1-64 and (February 1973): pp. 65-108.
68. Camille Pissarro, *Letters to His Son Lucien*, ed. John Rewald with the assistance of Lucien Pissarro, trans. Lionel Abel, Santa Barbara & Salt Lake City 1981, p. 174.
69. See Richard Thomson's discussion of the absence of dealer support for the advanced art of the 1880s in his catalogue essay 'The cultural geography of the Petit Boulevard', in Cornelia Homburg (ed.), exhib. cat., *Vincent van Gogh and the painters of the Petit Boulevard*, St Louis (St Louis Art Museum) 2001, esp. pp. 71-82.
70. For a further discussion of the nineteenth-century canon, see Jensen's 'Measuring canons: Reflections on innovation and the nineteenth-century canon of European art', in *Partisan canons*, ed. Anna Brzyski, Durham, NC, 2007.

71. White and White, *Canvases and careers*, p. 150.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
73. *Ibid.*, p. 155; also p. 88.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Interestingly, Gauguin made this point in 1902, when he described the impressionists' group exhibitions as 'one of the most influential efforts ever made in France, only a handful of men, with only one weapon, their talent, successfully doing battle against a fearsome power made up of Officialdom, the Press, and Money.' Paul Gauguin, *The writings of a savage*, ed. Daniel Guérin, trans. Eleanor Levieux, New York 1996, p. 225.
76. White and White, *Canvases and careers*, p. 158.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 151.



1. Paul Gauguin, *Self-portrait ('A l'ami Daniel')*, dedicated to Georges-Daniel de Monfreid, 1897, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; W 556

Out of sight, out of mind? Paul Gauguin's struggle for recognition after his departure for the South Seas in 1895

Elise Eckermann

In September 1902, on the remote island of Hiva Oa in the Marquesas Archipelago, Paul Gauguin completed his manuscript *Racontars de rapin* (Gossip of an art dauber). In it he had recorded a mixture of stories, memories and reflections on art, both past and present. He also looked back thirty years into the past, as he reminisced about his impressionist painter colleagues and the founding of their exhibition group in the year 1874.¹ It was not his aim in the *Racontars de rapin* just to tell the story of the impressionist group and their exhibitions. Nevertheless, it was important to Gauguin to mention them, 'to put on record one of the greatest and most influential endeavours made by certain people in France, who used their talent, which was their only strength, to struggle against the tremendous power of officialdom, the press, and money.'²

It was not until the fourth of these impressionist exhibitions, in 1879, that Paul Gauguin was invited to participate, after which he exhibited his works alongside his friends and comrades until the eighth and last show in 1886. He himself therefore belonged to the group of 'certain people' that he mentioned. From the beginning of his career as an artist, but especially after the summer of 1883, when he left his job in finance, Gauguin found himself confronted by the three great powers with which artists of the avant garde constantly had to contend: government institutions, art criticism and the art market. In his struggle for recognition, Gauguin's attitude and procedure as an artist were, to a large extent, determined by his interactions with these three forces.

What follows is an investigation of Gauguin's encounters with this 'tremendous power' after his departure for Tahiti, and of the role the artist and his works continued to play in Paris during the last years of his life.

'L'officiel'

A few months after Gauguin had arrived in Tahiti in September 1895 and settled in Punaauia, he was suffering from the injury to his foot and found himself, once again, in financial trouble. In desperate need of help, he turned in April 1896 to his Parisian friend Georges-Daniel de Monfreid: 'Today I have reached the depths, weak, half worn down by the merciless struggle that I had undertaken. I fall on my knees and put aside all pride.'³

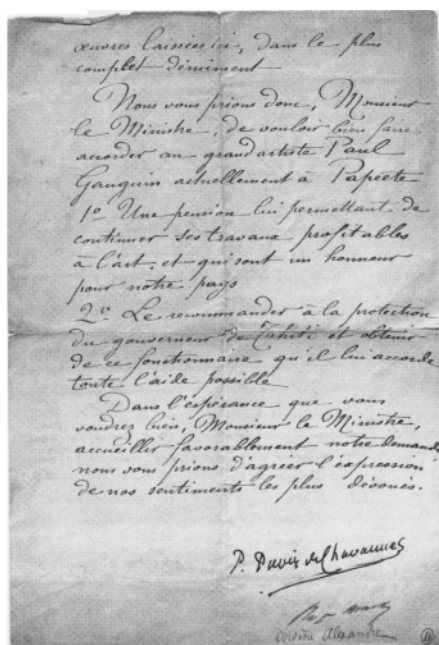
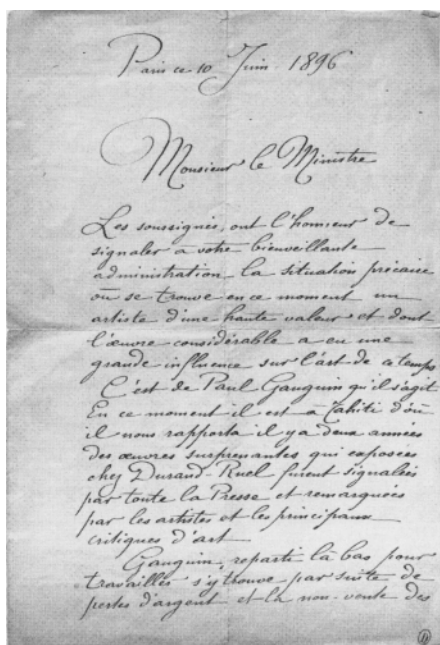
Gauguin had no way of knowing that he had, in the meantime, achieved a great triumph in an official art institution: the Musée des arts décoratifs in Brussels had purchased his *Vase decorated with Breton scenes* (1886-87, Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels; G. 45) at the annual salon of La Libre Esthétique in spring 1896. This ceramic piece was the first of Gauguin's works to be purchased during his lifetime by a public collection. Gauguin, however, never learned of this purchase. Furthermore, the 400 francs realized by the sale never benefited the impoverished artist, for the vase belonged to the ceramist Ernest Chaplet and had been sent to the exhibition by him.⁴

Around the same time, in 1896, Gauguin's friends and admirers in Paris took up his cause. Art critic and Inspecteur des Beaux-Arts Roger Marx, who, in 1894 had published an important article about Gauguin in the *Revue Encyclopédique* with numerous illustrations,⁵ organized an official petition in support of Gauguin (ill. 2), which was co-signed by Puvis de Chavannes and Arsène Alexandre. In it, they called for the Ministre des Beaux-Arts 'to consent to grant to the great artist, Paul Gauguin (1) A pension that will allow him to continue his work, which is profitable to art and an honour to our country; (2) To commend him to the protection of the governor of Tahiti and ensure that this official offers him all possible

help.⁶ Schuffenecker – who actually wrote out the petition – reported in a letter that public figures such as Degas, Mallarmé, Mirbeau and Carrière were also supposed to sign the appeal, but that Georges Chaudet and Charles Morice felt that this action was not the best way to serve Gauguin's interests.⁷

Even though Gauguin himself had tried to win official recognition just a few years earlier, when he offered to donate his painting *la orana Maria* (*Hail Mary*, 1891, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; W 428) to the Musée du Luxembourg, this attempt had left him deeply wounded: 'It has never been my intention to beg the state for anything. All of my struggles away from officialdom, the dignity that I have fought to maintain my entire life – today they lose their meaning.'⁸

As a result of the efforts of his friends in Paris, 200 francs arrived for Gauguin in Tahiti at the end of 1896, which the Directeur des Beaux-Arts, Henry Roujon,



2. Letter signed by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Roger Marx and Arsène Alexandre to the Ministre de l'Instruction Publique, des Beaux-Arts et des Cultes, Alfred Nicolas Rambaud, Paris, 10 June 1896. Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris

had sent 'by way of encouragement'.⁹ The painter, however, remained true to the convictions he had set out in the letter quoted above, and he sent the money, which he so desperately needed, back to Paris.¹⁰ It was at this point that all ties between Gauguin, who had so sharply criticized the state's policies for acquiring art,¹¹ and the institutional apparatus were cut.

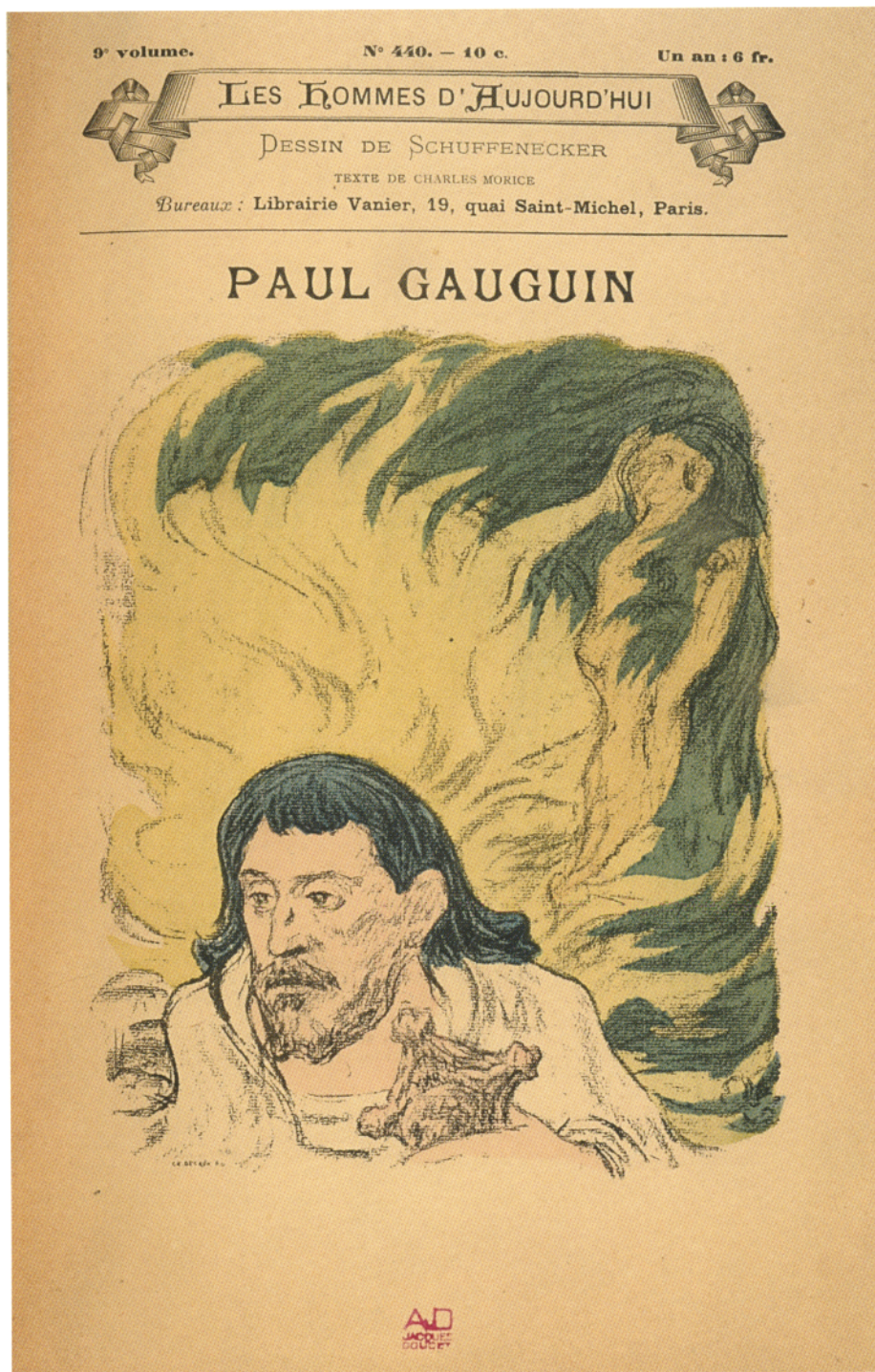
'La presse'

The last quarter of the nineteenth century in France saw a widespread restructuring of art institutions in the country. The state finally withdrew from its involvement in the organization of the Salons and thereby gave up its monopolistic control over the consecration of fine artists, a monopoly that Gauguin had mocked as a 'régime du sabre'.¹² The most notable change was that the more progressive artists in France found themselves for the first time without institutional support. The avant garde was particularly vulnerable to the newly acquired power of art critics and art dealers, which Harrison and Cynthia White aptly termed the 'dealer-critic system'.¹³ Gauguin, after his formative experiences as a financial broker, coolly and clearly recognized the new interdependencies in this system. He consciously developed ties to critics and men of letters, artist colleagues and dealers, carefully cultivating the relationships that might be most advantageous for himself. In 1898, Thadée Natanson wrote: 'For several years now, enthusiastic friends, including literary men, have brought him resounding fame.' But he also admitted that 'this hurt him more than it helped: he did not succeed in winning over the public as an artist needs to in order to live from his work; instead, his fame provoked strong protests.'¹⁴

Gauguin's absence made itself felt in Paris. It now became extremely difficult for the artist to maintain the necessary connections from the other side of the world, especially since mail took eight weeks to reach the French capital. His name no longer appeared so often in articles on contemporary art, and his works were not exhibited nearly so frequently and in such large numbers.

In 1896, the journal *Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui* was still interested enough to devote its June number exclusively to Gauguin. On the first page was his portrait, drawn by Emile Schuffenecker (ill. 3). The text had been written by Charles Morice, who was always loyal and proved ultimately to be Gauguin's most zealous and constant defender in his absence.¹⁵ When, at the end of November 1896, the first of Gauguin's Tahiti paintings were exhibited in the Galerie Vollard, Thadée

3. Title page of the journal *Les Hommes d'aujourd'hui* 9, no. 440 (June 1896), drawing by Emile Schuffenecker, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris



Natanson wrote the only review, which appeared in *La Revue Blanche*.¹⁶ And the works shown in March 1897 in the exhibition of La Libre Esthétique did not get an enthusiastic reception from either the Belgian or the French art press.

At roughly the same time, in spring 1897, Gauguin sent new paintings to Daniel de Monfreid, to which he joined some surprising suggestions: 'I am not at all a supporter of exhibitions. ... I have many enemies and am fated always to have many – indeed more and more – of them. Yet each time I show my work, my enemies are woken from their slumber; they start barking and repel the weary art lover. The best way to sell is through silence, while at the same time putting pressure on the art dealers.'¹⁷ Most importantly, he refused to participate in an exhibition organized by Schuffenecker, which was supposed to bring together the artists who had shown in the 1889 Volpini exhibition with members of the Nabis. Gauguin was afraid not so much that art collectors would be turned away by negative reviews, but that Cézanne and Van Gogh might usurp his status as the initiator of a new, modern trend in art. In fact, Natanson had already made a suggestion to this effect in his most recent article.¹⁸ And, in his notes on André Mellerio's essay *Le mouvement idéaliste*, in which Gauguin was named as the 'protagoniste du mouvement', André Fontainas wrote: 'Van Gogh's role – alongside Cézanne's – in the most recent movements in French painting had yet to be fully appreciated in this book. ... However, his [Van Gogh's] influence seems as important as that of Paul Gauguin.'¹⁹ Once discussions about the historical aspects of movements in modern painting and their initiators got underway in Paris, Gauguin preferred to withdraw from the art scene for the time being, since he felt that he personally could have no immediate influence over the debate.

Apart from their appearance in a few group exhibitions, Gauguin's works could only be viewed by potential buyers in the studio of Daniel de Monfreid, who represented the interests of his friend in the metropolis. Otherwise they had to rely upon the art dealer Ambroise Vollard, who had assembled a small mixed lot of Gauguin's paintings purchased on the open art market and from friends of the painter. On the Paris art market the price of his paintings hit rock bottom. At the auction of the Dosbourg collection, the most expensive painting by Gauguin, *Nave nave moe* (1894, State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg; W 512), was sold for just 160 francs.²⁰ Gauguin was always fully aware that his work had to be accessible to the public, so he advised Monfreid to exhibit a different painting in Vollard's gallery every month, 'without causing a stir ... just for it to be sold.'²¹

It was not until the summer of 1898 that Gauguin decided to present his newest works in an individual exhibition. Along with his paintings he sent precise directions for organizing the event to Daniel de Monfreid: 'No use sending [invitations] to all of Sérusier's friends, Denis, and the like – or to the press either. No publicity, just [send them] to the right people.'²² Gauguin imagined a small, intimate commercial exhibition, to which only a select crowd would be invited.

D'où venons-nous? in the Galerie Vollard

The exhibition took place from 17 November to 10 December 1898 in the Galerie Vollard. Its centrepiece was the large painting *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?* (*Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*) (ill. 4), which was accompanied by several paintings related to it in subject matter.

Natanson published an explanation of the paintings in the December 1898 issue of *La Revue Blanche*: 'These are eight motifs inspired by the decor where the painter lives and by the large decorative, mysterious panel that brings them together, but they can also represent fragmentary-replicas rather than studies.'²³ Here he acknowledges that the paintings were conceived as an ensemble by the artist. Reviewers generally applauded Gauguin's 'great decorative sense'.²⁴ In this regard, Gustave Geffroy and André Fontainas expressed regret that Gauguin had not yet received an official commission to execute a large-scale decorative composition. In 1890 Albert Aurier had, in fact, already emphasized the decorative character of Gauguin's works in his article 'Le symbolisme en peinture – Paul Gauguin', in which he demanded for this 'decorator of genius': 'Walls! Walls! Give him walls!...' ²⁵

In the *Chronique des arts et de la curiosité* supplement to the highly esteemed *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Julien Leclercq declared that 'there is no artist more talked about at the present time [than Gauguin]'. This did not mean, however, that the artist was generally appreciated: 'You can count on your fingers the people who know the true value of his talent.'²⁶ The writer, who was so close to Gauguin and who had defended him in 1894-95 against the written attacks of Camille Mauclair, decided this time to withhold his estimation and gave no analysis of the works. After giving an outline of Gauguin's artistic development, he left it to other critics to grasp the necessary opportunity to 'attempt a reappraisal'.

Leclercq's colleagues commended the colour composition as well as the modelling, which had earlier been sharply criticized as deformed. In a long article, Fontainas described the painting *Te bourao* (ill. 5), as 'a fully decorative panel: among dark blues and greens, noble plant and animal forms mingle in pure arabesques. Nothing more: it is a perfect harmony of forms and colours.'²⁷ Ivanhoé Rambosson, meanwhile, in an unreservedly positive review, described the painting *Vairumati* (ill. 6) as having 'beautiful colour and beautiful lines'.²⁸ The critic for *La Plume* was, incidentally, the only one to mention the exhibited works by their names. Rambosson's article thus confirms that, in addition to the monumental paintings *D'où venons-nous* and *Vairumati*, the paintings *Rave te hiti aamu* (ill. 7) and *Faà ara* (ill. 8) were also shown.

Because they were limited by the brevity of their columns, Rambosson and Geffroy offered only general analyses of Gauguin's work. According to Rambosson, 'he [Gauguin] considers painting to be a simple way of expressing feelings. He



4. Paul Gauguin, *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?* (*Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?*), 1897, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Tompkins collection; W 561



5. Paul Gauguin, *Te bourao*, 1897, Private collection; W 563

wishes to hide nothing of his sensations. He wants them to be reproduced completely, although transposed. This brings him to symbolism, to the translation of his idea through a balanced totality of colours and lines.'²⁹ In *Le Journal*, on the other hand, Geffroy expressed some concerns: 'To my mind, there is always too firm a belief in artifice, but there is also a taste for nature that comes to the fore, very lively and very charming.'³⁰

Natanson even complained: 'M. Gauguin still wants ... to make us think through the medium of the visual arts, in this case painting.' The critic for the *Revue Blanche* was not especially fond of the philosophical overlay of Gauguin's work: 'M. Gauguin's philosophical, or, if you wish, moral merit, can be considered separately, especially if one appreciates it less than his artistic gifts. It would lead us to examine deep and complex questions, and it would be leading us too far.' Despite this view, he did offer an analysis of *D'où venons-nous*: 'The motto inscribed on the painting's frame invites us to meditate on the mystery of our fate ... However, one should note that the meaning that should become apparent from the great canvas is at first difficult to grasp and that, moreover, this meaning does not impart a sufficient unity to the painting. The composition demands a commentary to vindicate itself, since the work is unable to do this adequately on its own: it remains obscure.'³¹



6. Paul Gauguin, *Vairumati*, 1897, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, collection Kojiro Matsukata; W 559

Fontainas, too, was sharply critical of Gauguin's principal work: 'In the broad panel that M. Gauguin is exhibiting, nothing, not even the two supple and pensive figures who appear there, peaceful and so beautiful, nor even the skillful evocation of a mysterious idol, would be able to reveal to us the meaning of the allegory, if he had not taken the trouble to write in a corner at the top of the canvas: "Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?" The focus of interest is, moreover, diffused.'³² Although Natanson and Fontainas expressed reservations about certain paintings of Gauguin's, art critics in general were positively disposed towards the painter. Nevertheless, they did not place him first among his contemporaries. Natanson, for example, opened his discussion of the exhibition thus: 'M. Gauguin has a place apart among the artists of our time. Certainly an important one. Out of the ordinary.'³³

'L'argent'

Ultimately, the exhibition did not win Gauguin the material success he had hoped for; it seems that not a single painting was sold. After it closed, Vollard acquired the group of most recent works, with the exception of the largest painting, for 1,000 francs. Gauguin was appalled: 'What terrible luck. What's more, you know my opinion of Vollard, he's a crocodile of the worst type – which means that the only clients who might be interested in buying my work are in Vollard's hands.'³⁴ Before his departure, at the beginning of 1895, Gauguin had attempted to do business with Durand-Ruel, offering him thirty-five paintings for a total price of 21,000 francs. But the art dealer rejected his offer.

Plagued by his financial troubles in Tahiti, Gauguin concocted a new economic strategy, by applying the mechanisms he knew so well from the financial market to the art market. He imagined a group of investors, 'fifteen people who understand my painting or want to get a return on their investment'.³⁵ Gauguin wanted to send fifteen paintings a year in advance, for which he would receive a total of 2,400 francs. The paintings, which would therefore cost 160 francs each, would be allocated by lot among the interested parties. In order to convince his potential patrons to take part, Gauguin argued – as so often before – that his works would yield large speculative profits.³⁶ Daniel de Monfreid, Emile Schuffenecker and Maxime Maufra were, however, unsuccessful in generating sufficient enthusiasm among art lovers in Paris for Gauguin and his plan. Incidentally, it was only a few years later, in 1904, that a syndicate of collectors was founded in Paris that employed just the system that Gauguin had proposed. The investment fund *La peau de l'ours* bought avant-garde works of art with the exclusive goal of reaping the speculative profits after ten years. This is how the group acquired Gauguin's portrait of the musician Schnekklud – *Upaupa Schnekklud* (*The player Schnekklud*) (1894,

Baltimore Museum of Art; W 517) – which was sold at auction in 1914 for almost fifteen times the original price.³⁷

In spite of everything, the Vollard exhibition had indeed invigorated interest in the exotic artist. Thus in 1899 Gauguin was able to repeat to Monfreid what he had learned from Maurice Denis: 'That Degas and Rouart are fighting over my paintings, dealers are speculating on my name and my canvases are fetching very good prices in the sales.'³⁸ Vollard was particularly interested in speculating in Gauguin's work. The art dealer now decided to accept the demands that Gauguin had made in 1897 and began to send work materials to him in the South Seas. In 1900 they signed an agreement that guaranteed Gauguin a monthly allowance of 300 francs in return for an option for Vollard to purchase twenty-five paintings at 200 francs.³⁹ When, a short time later, the art patron Emmanuel Bibesco offered to become the artist's patron, to release him from the contract with Vollard, Gauguin rejected his proposal. He had absolutely no interest in allowing his artistic production to disappear into a private collection. It was much more important to him, now at last, to have his works marketed by a professional dealer. He wanted to profit from the effort that Vollard had made and sell the paintings that remained in his own hands, with their increased market value, at higher prices.⁴⁰ His monthly allowance now gave him the financial security he needed to work independently during the last years of his life on the island of Hiva Oa, where he had settled in autumn 1901.

'Si encore on voyait parfois de vos œuvres'

After the Vollard exhibition in 1898, a silence had developed around Gauguin; his works could hardly be seen in Paris galleries any more, and his name seldom appeared in French publications. Gauguin therefore planned for a representative selection of his works to be displayed in the framework of the Exposition Universelle of 1900, when the attention of the whole world would be focused on Paris. Just as he had exhibited his works in 1889 at M. Volpini's Café des Arts, Gauguin intended to show his paintings, drawings and prints in a private exhibition, possibly at the Galerie Vollard.⁴¹ However, his most recent works did not reach Paris in time. In the end, Gauguin was only represented at the Exposition de la Centennale de l'Art français by a single *Paysage de Bretagne* and nothing more. Roger Marx, who was responsible for organizing the Centennale and had helped impressionism to its triumph there, would have known perfectly well how to get hold of more of Gauguin's paintings, had he wished to do so. Fontainas, who in February 1900 had already begun to express his suspicion that the organizers intended to exclude an entire group of post-impressionist painters, publicly denounced their absence from the Exposition décennale.⁴²

In the course of the same year, Paul Lorquet's book *Les maîtres d'aujourd'hui* was published. This discussion of recent French painting devoted long chapters to art movements such as impressionism and symbolism. In the sections 'La revanche de la couleur' and 'Archaisme et exotisme' names such as Cézanne, Redon, Vallotton, Ranson, Sérusier, Vuillard, Bonnard and Denis appeared, but Gauguin, who would have fitted perfectly into these categories, had not a single word devoted to him.⁴³

This led Fontainas to write to Gauguin in late 1902, asking: 'If only we still occasionally saw some of your paintings? Do you hold yourself in such contempt?' Gauguin concluded from this that 'Vollard is hiding some of my works: it is an underground effort which is perhaps excellent but which nevertheless is a bit too slow... for me.'⁴⁴ Three months later Gauguin died.



7. Paul Gauguin, *Rave te hiti aamu* (*The Idol*), 1898, State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg; W 570



8. Paul Gauguin, *Faà ara*, 1898, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen; W 575

Criticism of the critics

Of the five articles that appeared on the occasion of the Vollard exhibition, Gauguin appears to have been aware only of the one written by Fontainas in the *Mercure*. As a shareholder in the publication, the artist received new issues even in the South Seas. Gauguin described the article to his friend Monfreid as 'a review by a man who understands nothing but is well-intentioned.'⁴⁵ As a result, he gave up the vow he had made never to answer a critic, and in March 1899 he addressed Fontainas directly. In his letter he focused on the topic of art criticism. He criticized the patronage of painters, which had formerly been the province of academic institutions and was now practised by art critics: 'Among today's critics, who are serious, full of good intentions and well-informed, there is a tendency to impose on us a method for thinking and dreaming; this would then be nothing but another kind of slavery.' He expressed his fear that art criticism was too preoccupied with its own concerns, namely literature, and that it had, in the process, lost sight of the interests of painting, and finally he quoted a sentence from Mallarmé: 'A critic! A gentleman who sticks his nose where it doesn't belong.'⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Gauguin never intended to attack Fontainas personally; this, he knew, would have made the editor of the art columns of the *Mercure de France* into an enemy. Thus in his next letter he was quick to exclude his correspondent from the 'clan that, with every new *époque*, says to painters, according to the latest trends of the day, "you will think this, otherwise you will be at our mercy".'⁴⁷

In September 1902 Gauguin again turned to Fontainas, sending him the manuscript *Racontars de rapin*, which he had just completed, and asking him to submit it to the *Mercure de France* for publication. He described his writing as an 'article of anti-criticism', in which he attempted 'to prove that painters in no circumstances need the support and instruction of men of letters.'⁴⁸

At the beginning of his career as an artist, Gauguin defended himself privately against art critics such as Huysmans, Antoine and Fénéon by writing letters to his friends. During his time in Paris, in the years 1893-95, he called into question the right of authors to practise art criticism and presented the following reflection in the newspaper *Le Soir*: 'Perhaps it would not be a bad thing if the people involved – here, painters – were to stand up for themselves on their own, without the intervention of an interpreter.'⁴⁹ He himself then began to publish discussions of his colleagues' exhibitions and to comment publicly upon contemporary art events in the press.⁵⁰ In the last years of his life, he would not accept that literary men could have any competence as art critics, and he attacked art criticism as a whole in his *Racontars de rapin*.

In 1903 Camille Mauclair wrote in an article on the 'mission of modern criticism': 'If the artist has little concern for the consumer, that is, for glory and for profit, then he no longer has any reason to disguise his contempt for the critic.'⁵¹

Gauguin, cut off from the art scene in Paris, weak and sick, but nonetheless financially secure on his South Sea island, had evidently reached this point. Furthermore, he cast doubt on the effectiveness of art criticism, which, first and foremost, was directed at the artist. Whether highly praised or torn apart by criticism, 'no matter. First of all, I wouldn't know how to change for good or for bad. My work, which is a far fiercer critic, says and will say who I am, whether dreadful or glorious.'⁵²

'L'œuvre bonne reste'

Right to the end of his life, Gauguin was never able to secure a place for himself in the official institutions of fine arts. Thus one can hardly speak of a victory in his struggle against 'l'officiel'.

From the beginning of his career as an artist, Gauguin was well aware of the determining power of art criticism. He therefore expressly sought out contact with its representatives in order to use it most effectively to his advantage. During his time in the capital, his interdependency with writers stood in the foreground of his focus. Thus he achieved great success in his struggles with 'la presse', thanks, in fact, to its intervention on his behalf. Nevertheless, after his departure for the South Seas, the name Gauguin generated little attention in the Paris art scene. Because of his great distance from the metropolis, the artist was no longer able to exert an active influence on either the presentation of his works in exhibitions or the critical reception of his paintings. So he took an ever stronger stand against the tyranny and patronage of writers who penned art criticism, and he urged artists to defend themselves on their own ground.

Whereas Gauguin during his time in Paris had been dependent upon writers, after he had left the metropolis he became dependent upon the art market. In the last years of his artistic career he found himself forced to rely upon the art dealer Vollard and his friend Monfreid. His entire artistic oeuvre was in their hands. Because he had no personal presence in Paris, his paintings were his only means of positioning himself in the artistic field.

His only option was to use his artistic talent for himself and to paint good pictures, so that he could finally win the battle on his own terms. This is what he meant when he wrote in the summer of 1901 to Monfreid: 'In any case, the calculation is that one must go about making good paintings and then, sooner or later, it works. Criticism is transient, but good work remains. That is all there is.'⁵³ 'Unfortunately,' he continued, 'we have only a premonition of the good work. Time affirms it, and puts everything back in place.'

NOTES

An earlier version of this essay was presented at the colloquium *Gauguin entre deux cultures*, held at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, on 16 and 17 December 2003 in connection with the exhibition *Gauguin Tahiti: L'atelier des tropiques*. It is based upon chapters of my dissertation, 'En lutte contre une puissance formidable': *Paul Gauguin im Spannungsfeld von Kunstkritik und Kunstmarkt* (diss.), Weimar 2003.

1. Paul Gauguin, *Raconters de rapin: Fac-similé du manuscrit de Paul Gauguin*, ed. Victor Merlhès, Taravao (Tahiti) 1994, p. 24. Gauguin was off by two years in his statement of the founding year, which he gave as 1872.
2. Ibid., pp. 24-25: 'Je la [l'histoire] signale seulement pour constater un des plus grands efforts influents qui aient été faits en France par quelques-uns seulement avec leur seule force, le talent, en lutte contre une puissance formidable qui était l'officiel, la presse et l'argent.'
3. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, ed. Annie Joly-Segalen, Paris 1950, no. xx1, p. 87: 'Aujourd'hui je suis par terre, faible, à moitié usé par la lutte sans merci que j'avais entreprise, je m'agenouille et mets de côté tout orgueil.'
4. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Archives de l'Art Contemporain de Belgique, Brussels, AACB 11656 and AACB 11657, letters from Ernest Chaplet to Octave Maus, Choisy-le Roy, 31 January and 11 May 1896.
5. Roger Marx, 'Revue artistique: exposition Paul Gauguin', *La Revue Encyclopédique* 4, no. 76 (1 February 1894), pp. 33-34.
6. Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, fonds d'autographes, carton 116, letter signed by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Roger Marx and Arsène Alexandre to the Ministre des Beaux-Arts, 10 June 1896, p. 2: 'Nous vous prions donc, Monsieur le Ministre, de vouloir bien faire accorder au grand artiste Paul Gauguin [...] 1° Une pension lui permettant de continuer ses travaux profitables à l'art, et qui sont un honneur pour notre pays, 2° Le recommander à la protection du gouverneur

de Tahiti et obtenir de ce fonctionnaire qu'il lui accorde toute l'aide possible.'

7. Letter from Emile Schuffenecker to Paul Gauguin, 1896, in Victor Merlhès, *De Bretagne en Polynésie: Paul Gauguin, pages inédites*, Papeete 1995, p. 95: 'Roger Marx qui s'intéresse beaucoup à vous m'avait suggéré l'idée d'une pétition au ministre des Beaux-Arts pour obtenir une pension de l'Etat. [...] nous devions la faire signer aussi à Degas – Mallarmé, Mirbeau Carrière – &c. mais Chaudet m'a conseillé de m'arrêter.' ('Roger Marx, who is very interested in you, had suggested to me the idea of a petition to the Minister of Fine Arts to obtain a state pension. [...] we were supposed to get it signed as well by Degas – Mallarmé, Mirbeau, Carrière – etc. but Chaudet advised me to hold off.')
8. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. xxiv, p. 93: 'mendier à l'Etat n'a jamais été mon intention. Tous mes efforts de lutte en dehors de l'officiel, la dignité que je me suis efforcé d'avoir toute ma vie, perdent de ce jour leur caractère.' The gift of this painting, with which Gauguin had intended to gain entrance in 1893 to the museum of contemporary art as a stepping stone to the Louvre, was rejected by the museum curator Léonce Bénédict. See Gloria Groom, 'Chronology: August 1893-June 1895' in Richard Brettell *et al.*, exhib. cat. *The art of Paul Gauguin*, Washington (National Gallery of Art), Chicago (Art Institute) & Paris (Grand Palais) 1988-89, p. 291.
9. Bengt Danielsson, *Gauguin à Tahiti et aux îles Marquises*, Papeete 1975, p. 195: 'à titre d'encouragement'.
10. He reported to Armand Séguin that, 'J'ai bien entendu parlé des 200f que Roujon m'a accordés, voire même qu'il les a envoyés, mais je les ai refusés avec lettre à l'appui.' ('I did indeed hear talk of the 200 francs that Roujon granted to me, and even that he had sent the money, but I turned it down together with the letter of support.') Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, Mélanges littéraires, xix-xxe siècle, fol. 8 and 9, letter from Paul Gauguin to Armand Séguin, 15 January 1897.
11. Paul Gauguin, 'Notes sur l'art à l'Exposition Universelle', *Le Moderniste Illustré*, no. 11 (4 July 1889), pp. 84-86, and no. 12 (13 July 1889), pp. 90-91; idem, 'Qui trompe-t-on ici?', *Le Moderniste Illustré*, no. 23

(21 September 1889), pp. 170-71; idem, 'Une lettre de Paul Gauguin: à propos de Sèvres et du dernier four', *Le Soir*, no. 9373 (23 April 1895), p. 2; and idem, 'Les peintres français à Berlin', *Le Soir*, no. 9381 (1 May 1895), p. 2.

12. *Raconters de rapin*, p. 6.

13. Harrison C. White and Cynthia A. White, *Canvases and careers: Institutional change in the French painting world*, New York & London 1965, esp. pp. 95-99.

14. Thadée Natanson, 'Petite gazette d'art: De M. Paul Gauguin', *La Revue Blanche* 17, no. 132 (1 December 1898), p. 544: 'Des amis enthousiastes, parmi quoi se comptaient des littérateurs, lui ont fait, voici quelques années, une renommée bruyante. Elle lui a nui plus qu'elle ne l'a servi: il ne lui a point dû la conquête de ce public qu'il faut à un artiste pour qu'il puisse vivre de son travail; elle a fait naître des protestations violentes.'

15. Schuffenecker may have hoped that he would be allowed to write the text for this number. In fact, in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris, fonds d'autographes, carton 117, aut. 1373, there are six hand-written pages by Schuffenecker about Gauguin dating from March 1896.

16. Thadée Natanson, 'Peinture', *La Revue Blanche* 11, no. 84 (1 December 1896), pp. 517-18.

17. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. xxix, p. 99: 'je ne suis pas du tout partisan des Expositions. [...] J'ai beaucoup d'ennemis et je suis destiné à en avoir toujours beaucoup, même de plus en plus; or chaque fois que j'expose, on les réveille, et eux tous d'aboyer et dégoûter l'amateur qu'on fatigue. Le meilleur moyen de vendre c'est encore le silence, tout en travaillant le marchand de tableaux.'

18. Thadée Natanson, 'Peinture', p. 517: 'Son [Gauguin] influence moins profonde que fut et sera encore celle de M. Cézanne [...] comptera cependant parmi celles qui auront agi sur la plus jeune génération des peintres contemporains.' (His [Gauguin's] influence is not as strong as Cézanne's was and will be [...] it will, however, be considered as one of those that affected the youngest generation of contemporary painters.)

19. André Fontainas, 'Art: Paul Gauguin', *Mercur de France* 21, no. 85 (January 1897), p. 222: 'Le rôle de Van Gogh, à côté de Cézanne, si considérable dans le mouvement le plus récent de la peinture français n'est peut-être pas assez complètement affirmé dans le livre [...].

Cependant son influence [Van Gogh] apparaît aussi importante que celle de Paul Gauguin.', trans. in Douglas W. Druick and Peter Kort Zegers, exhib. cat. *Van Gogh and Gauguin: The studio of the south*, Chicago (Art Institute) & Amsterdam (Van Gogh Museum) 2001-2, p. 349; and André Mellerio, *Le mouvement idéaliste en peinture*, Paris 1896, p. 24.

20. *Collection Ch. Dosbourg: Tableaux modernes, aquarelles, pastels, dessins, lithographies*, auction cat. Paris (Hôtel Drouot), 10 November 1897, lot 16. This auction was the first indication that Gauguin's Tahitian paintings sold for higher prices than those from earlier periods.

21. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. xli, p. 121: 'sans bruit il y ait chez Vollard tous les mois une toile nouvelle, simplement là pour être vendue.'

22. Ibid., no. xlv, p. 127: 'Inutile d'envoyer [les cartons d'invitation] à toute la bande Sérusier, Denis et Cie; pas plus qu'à la presse. Sans bruit et à qui de droit.'

23. Thadée Natanson, 'Petite gazette d'art', p. 545: 'Ce sont huit motifs inspirés par le décor où vit le peintre et le grand panneau décoratif, mystérieux, qui les assemble, mais dont ceux-ci peuvent aussi bien figurer des fragments-répliques que des études.' Trans. in exhib. cat. *The art of Paul Gauguin*, p. 392 n. 10. Although the large exhibition *Gauguin Tahiti* in Paris and Boston (2003-4) attempted to reconstruct the 1898 exhibition and was successful in evoking its overall impression, not all of the paintings that were exhibited by Vollard have been positively identified.

24. Gustave Geffroy, 'L'Art d'Aujourd'hui', *Le Journal* 7, no. 2245 (20 November 1898), p. 2.

25. Albert Aurier, 'Le symbolisme en peinture: Paul Gauguin', *Mercur de France* 2, no. 15 (March 1891), p. 165: 'vous avez parmi vous un décorateur de génie: des murs! des murs! donnez-lui des murs!...'

26. Julien Leclercq, 'Petites Expositions: Paul Gauguin', *Chronique des arts et de la curiosité*, no. 38 (3 December 1898), p. 343: 'Il n'y a pas d'artiste plus discuté que lui à l'heure actuelle. On pourrait compter sur les doigts ceux qui apprécient son talent à sa valeur. Bien qu'il ait été condamné par le plus grand nombre, il ne faudrait pas avoir trop de respect pour la chose jugée, mais tenter une révision.'

27. André Fontainas, 'Art moderne', *Mercur de France* 29, no. 109 (January 1899), p. 237: 'un

panneau pleinement décoratif: parmi les bleus sombres et les verts, s'y confondent, selon de pures arabesques, les nobles formes végétales et animales. Rien de plus, c'est une parfaite harmonie de formes et de couleurs.'

28. Ivanhoé Rambosson, 'La promenade de Janus: Causeries d'art', *La Plume* 11 (January 1899), p. 29: 'Vairumati, d'une belle couleur et de belles lignes'.

29. Ibid.: 'il considère la peinture comme un simple moyen d'expression du sentiment. Il ne veut rien celer de sa sensation. Il la veut intégralement reproduite, bien que transposée. Ce qui l'amène au symbolisme, à la traduction de son idée par un ensemble équilibré de couleurs et de lignes.'

30. Gustave Geffroy, 'L'Art d'Aujourd'hui', p. 2: 'Il y a toujours ici, à mon sens, une croyance trop arrêtée de l'artifice, mais il y a aussi un goût de la nature qui revient, très vif et très charmant.'

31. Thadée Natanson, 'Petite gazette d'art', p. 546: 'M. Gauguin n'a pas renoncé [...] à nous faire réfléchir par le moyen des arts plastiques, ici la peinture. La devise qui s'inscrit au cadre du tableau capital nous invite à méditer sur le mystère de notre destinée. [...] Le mérite philosophique ou si l'on veut morale de M. Gauguin peut être envisagé à part, surtout si on le goûte moins que ses dons plastiques. Il mènerait à examiner des questions graves et complexes et nous mènerait trop loin. [...] observons cependant que le sens qui devrait se dégager de la grande toile est d'abord difficilement saisissable, et que, de plus, il ne confère pas au tableau une unité suffisante. La composition, pour se justifier, puisqu'elle ne le fait pas assez matériellement, appelle un commentaire: il reste obscur.'

32. André Fontainas, 'Art moderne', p. 238: 'Dans le large panneau que M. Gauguin expose, rien, et pas même les deux souples et pensives figures qui y passent tranquilles et si belles, ou l'évocation habile d'une idole mystérieuse, ne nous révélerait le sens de l'allégorie, s'il n'avait pris soin d'écrire dans un coin au haut de la toile: "D'où venons-nous? que sommes-nous? où allons-nous?" L'intérêt est, au reste dispersé.'

33. Thadée Natanson, 'Petite gazette d'art', p. 544: 'M. Gauguin a, parmi les artistes de notre époque, une place à part. Notable à coup sûr. Curieuse.'

34. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. LIX, p. 151: 'Mais c'est vraiment

de la déveine, du reste vous connaissez mon opinion sur Vollard qui est un caïman de la pire espèce. C'est-à-dire que la seule clientèle susceptible d'acheter mes œuvres est dans les mains de Vollard.'

35. Ibid., no. xxii, p. 88: 'Réunir quinze personnes comprenant ma peinture ou voulant gagner.'

36. Ibid., no. xxii, pp. 88-89; and letter from Paul Gauguin to Maxime Maufra, June 1896, in Jean Leymarie, exhib. cat. *Gauguin: exposition du centenaire*, Paris (Orangerie des Tuileries) 1949, app. v, p. 102.

37. Michael C. FitzGerald, *Making modernism: Picasso and the creation of the market for twentieth-century art*, New York 1995, pp. 15-23.

38. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. LIX, p. 151: 'Que Degas et Rouart se disputent mes tableaux: les marchands spéculent sur mon nom et que mes toiles atteignent de jolis prix dans les ventes.'

39. John Rewald, *Studies in post-impressionism*, ed. Irene Gordon and Frances Weitzenhoffer, London 1986, pp. 178-79, 188-92. For more on this topic, see also: Jean-Paul Morel, 'Paroles d'homme(s): Le contrat Gauguin-Vollard', in exhib. cat. *la orana Gauguin*, Papeete (Musée Tahiti et des Îles) 2003, pp. 61-71.

40. *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. LXIV, p. 159: 'J'ai donc tout intérêt à me réserver participation à la hausse.' ('It's therefore very much in my interest to reserve the right to participate in the rise in prices.')

41. Ibid., no. LVIII, p. 150; no. LIX, p. 151; and no. LXIII, p. 158.

42. André Fontainas, 'Art moderne', *Mercur de France* 33, no. 122 (February 1900), pp. 522-27; and idem, 'L'Exposition Centennale de la peinture française', *Mercur de France* 35, no. 127 (July 1900), pp. 132-60: 'Mais l'exposition décennale qui eût dû compléter, à côté, la Centennale, nie délibérément toute la leçon de délivrance par elle apportée pour n'établir à des murs moroses que la tristesse officielle des friperies de la routine.' ('But the Exposition décennale, next to the Centennale, which should have complemented it, deliberately contradicts the lesson of deliverance taught by the main exhibition, and has on its gloomy walls nothing but the sad official display of uninspired junk.') (p. 159)

43. Paul Lorquet, *Les maîtres d'aujourd'hui*, Paris [1900], pp. 311-12.

44. Letter from André Fontainas to Paul Gauguin, Paris, 19 November 1902, cited from Laurent Houssais, 'Si loin, si proche: Paul Gauguin et André Fontainas', 48/14 *La revue du Musée d'Orsay*, no.17 (autumn 2003), p. 61: 'Si encore on voyait parfois de vos œuvres? Vous méprisez-vous à ce point?'; and *Lettres de Paul Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. LXXXIV, p. 195: 'J'en conclus que Vollard cache en partie mes œuvres: c'est un travail souterrain qui est peut-être excellent mais qui cependant est un peu lent... pour moi.'

45. Ibid., no. LII, p. 140: 'J'ai bien lu une critique dans le Mercure, critique d'un homme qui ne comprend rien, mais qui est bien intentionné.'

46. Paul Gauguin, *Lettres à André Fontainas*, Paris 1994, no. 1, p. 18: 'La critique d'aujourd'hui, sérieuse, pleine de bonnes intentions et instruite tend à nous imposer une méthode de penser, de rêver, et alors ce serait un autre esclavage. [...] Un critique! Un monsieur qui se mêle de ce qui ne le regarde pas.'

47. Ibid., no. II, p. 22: 'C'était en conclusion pour tout un clan, qui à chaque époque selon le goût du jour dit aux peintres: "Tu penseras cela sinon tu seras à notre merci".'

48. *Lettres de Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. LXXXIII, p. 192: 'article de contre-critique [...] je me suis efforcé de prouver que les peintres en aucun cas n'ont besoin de l'appui et de l'instruction des hommes de lettres.'

49. Paul Gauguin, 'Les peintres français à Berlin', *Le Soir*, no. 9381 (1 May 1895), p. 2: 'peut-être n'est-il pas mauvais que les intéressés eux-mêmes – ici, les peintres – se défendent directement, sans entremise d'aucun interprète.'

50. Idem, 'Natures mortes', *Essais d'art libre* 4, January 1894, pp. 273-75; idem, 'Exposition de la Libre Esthétique', *Essais d'art libre* 5, February 1894, pp. 30-32; idem, 'Sous deux latitudes', *Essais d'art libre* 5, May 1894, pp. 75-80; and idem, 'Armand Séguin', *Mercure de France* 13, no. 62 (February 1895), pp. 222-24.

51. Camille Mauclair, 'La mission de la critique nouvelle', *La Quinzaine*, 1 September 1903, pp. 2-3: 'Si l'artiste se soucie peu du consommateur, c'est-à-dire de la gloire et du profit, il n'a plus aucune raison de dissimuler son mépris pour la critique.'

52. *Lettres à André Fontainas*, no. II, p. 23: 'Qu'importe, je ne saurais tout d'abord changer en bien ou en mal. Mon œuvre bien plus terrible critique dit et dira qui je suis en horreur ou en gloire.'

53. *Lettres de Gauguin à Georges-Daniel de Monfreid*, no. LXXV, p. 178: 'Toutefois, le calcul est qu'il faut s'occuper de faire des bons tableaux et alors tôt ou tard cela marche. La critique passe – l'œuvre bonne reste. Tout est là. Malheureusement, de l'œuvre bonne, nous n'en avons que le pressentiment, c'est le temps qui l'affirme et remet tout en place.'



1. Paul Gauguin, Detail of figure from carved doorframe of the *Maison du Joueur*, Atuona, 1902, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; G 132

Paul Gauguin's well rediscovered in Atuona, Hiva Oa (French Polynesia)

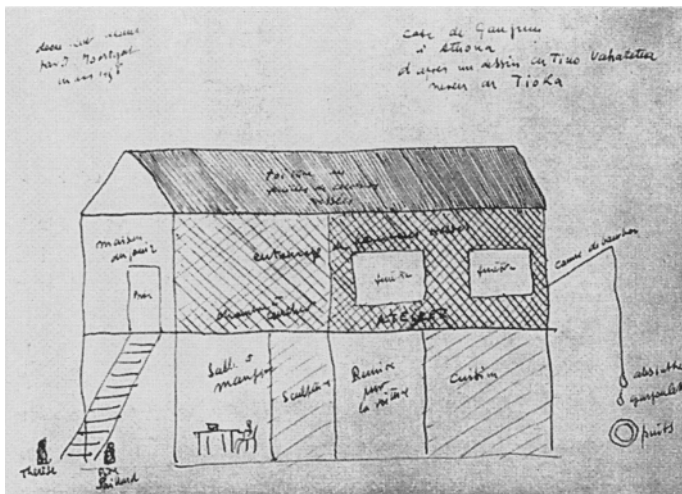
Caroline Boyle-Turner

In mid-September 1901 Paul Gauguin landed in Atuona, on the Marquesan island of Hiva Oa (French Polynesia). He was seeking a wilder, more 'primitive' locale than he had found in Tahiti, where he had lived and worked from 1891 to 1893 and from 1895 to 1901. Gauguin also wanted to escape the awkward political situation he had created for himself in Tahiti by fighting the colonial and ecclesiastical powers that be. He noted: 'I have overused Tahiti to some extent and out there [the Marquesas] I will find a completely new atmosphere that will make me do good work.'¹ In addition, he was quite ill – suffering the effects of syphilis, a badly healed broken ankle, and a weak heart. While the artist wanted a simpler life than the too Europeanized Tahiti could offer him, he was also a realist: he chose for what would turn out to be his last abode an island governed by France, so that he could benefit from governmental assistance if needed (as in Tahiti), and he chose the one island of the ten in the Marquesan chain that, at that time, served as the administrative seat of government, so that he could still be close to official governmental agencies such as a post office. Why he chose Atuona, Hiva Oa, and what he created there, however, are not the subject of this article;² the contents of the newly discovered well on his property is my focus. These objects, found in 2000,

shed light on Gauguin's day-to-day existence and his physical suffering at the very end of his life.

In 1901 Atuona was a village of around 750 people, which had been created only fifty years earlier around two missions; one Catholic, one Protestant. Gauguin arrived on a steamship from Papeete, Tahiti, loaded down not only with his artistic supplies and personal effects, but also his own pots and pans and wood to build a 'fare', or house; he intended to stay, and he needed land.

Right next to the centre of the village there was an empty parcel of land owned by the Catholic mission, which Gauguin purchased for 700 francs. Through its trees of breadfruit, coconut palms and banana plants he had a path cut and a clearing made to construct a simple house of his own design. Two local carpenters, Tioka and Kekela, built the house, which was not at all based on local traditions, but rather on ideas that Gauguin gleaned from studying Maori houses in New Zealand.³ Marquesan houses were built on stone platforms with a single sloping roof of either woven pandanus or banana leaves. Vertical poles, sometimes carved, held up the outer edge of the steeply sloping roof. The Maori houses Gauguin would have seen, on the other hand, often had a double sloped 'V' shaped roof, edged with carvings and supported at either end by carved poles. Carvings also surrounded the doorway – not a feature of Marquesan architecture. Gauguin's design is unique, however, with its steep staircase going up to a small entryway that he used as a bedroom, which opened onto a large, airy studio. The walls were



2. Timo Vahatetua, *Drawing of Gauguin's house in Atuona*, as published by Guillaume Le Bronnec, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 47 (January-April 1956), p. 196

made of panels of woven pandanus leaves, the roof of coconut leaves.⁴ The raised rooms were on pillars 2.4 metres off the ground, and, underneath them, the artist designed an open breezeway that served as his dining room. In the high heat and humidity of Atuona, spaces open to the breezes are necessary, and the idea of putting the studio upstairs may have been planned to make optimal use of the cooler off-sea breezes, as the house was located not far from the sea. No photographs of the house are known, but the extant wood carvings built around the doorway (ill. 1) and a small sketch of the house by Tioka's nephew, Timo, suggest its scale and overall design (ill. 2).

Wells were not normally used by Marquesans to gather water,⁵ but Timo's drawing shows a well dug in the ground at the rear of the house, as well as a bamboo stick overhanging the well from the second floor of the house to pull up water directly into the rear of the house – where Gauguin's studio was located. This was a clever solution to avoid climbing up and down the steep stairs of the house whenever the artist needed water. Rusted metal pieces and a handle found on Gauguin's property also suggest that there was a ground-level pump for the well.

Upon the death of Gauguin, on 8 May 1903, the house and its contents were inventoried by the local *brigadier*⁶ of the gendarmerie, Jean-Pierre Claverie. Number 19 of the inventory listed the land, and number 20 the furnished house, with no mention of a well. This inventory, made on 27 May, lists 113 items, from mundane household goods such as a coffee pot, to bundles of paintings. These objects, plus a horse, were sold at auction in Atuona on 20 July. When Victor Segalen arrived in Atuona on 10 August 1903, he found 'the studio of Gauguin, a long, sort of hut now empty, completely stripped'. The carved reliefs around the doorway (now in the Musée d'Orsay) were still intact, as was 'a Buddha born in the land of the maori'.⁷ The rest of Gauguin's possessions were gone. Segalen reported that he had found trunks full of Gauguin's possessions in Nuka-Hiva when he landed there on 3 August.⁸ These would have been the 15 trunks of objects sent from Atuona destined to be auctioned in Papeete (Tahiti) on 2 September.⁹

Immediately after Gauguin's death, the house and land were sold to his neighbour, the American storekeeper Ben Varney, whose store was right across the street from the property and from whom Gauguin had rented a room when he first arrived in Atuona. Varney demolished the house soon after the purchase.

In the century since the disappearance of both Gauguin and his house, the property on Atuona was sold, resold and divided up, and the well was filled in and lost to sight. Finally, in 2000, the town, under the leadership of its energetic mayor Guy Rauzy, managed to purchase the various bits of land that had made up Gauguin's original parcel, with the goal of constructing a 'Centre Paul Gauguin' and a replica of Gauguin's house, which he had called his *Maison du Jouis* (House of pleasure). Discussions concerning the construction of the buildings led Jean Saucourt, the former head of the 'Service d'équipement' of the village, to ask

permission to scour the land for evidence of the well that was depicted in Timo's drawing and that local lore confirmed had once existed, but was lost to sight. Permission was granted.

On 10 February 2000, using the heavy equipment available in the town's garage, M. Saucourt and a team of volunteers began to clean the weeds and trees off the former Gauguin property and to excavate for the well. After two false starts with a backhoe, the team found a line of 5 stones, each 25 cm in diameter, 50 cm below present ground level. Further digging with shovels turned up a low circular stone wall, consisting of three levels of stones, suggesting a well (ill. 3). By 3 o'clock that same day, the excavation had uncovered the circular configuration of the stones going down to 1.8 m, where water was finally found. At a depth of -1.2 m, a coin dated 1943 was discovered. The next day, with the help of ladders and a water pump, the excavators descended to 2.7 m below the surface, finding the well still lined with its circles of 25 cm stones. At this level, they began to find many objects, culminating, as they descended, in an ordinary comb with the inscription in English, 'Good Year 1851'. The bottom of the well was finally reached on 11 February, at around 3.5 metres below ground level. The profile of the well is: 2.10 m



3. Photograph of the uncovered well on the site of Gauguin's home, Atuona

PUITS DE PAUL GAUGUIN

10 février 2000
à 11H00

De forme tronconique, le puits estimé à 4.50 m
de profondeur en février 2000,
fait en réalité 3.50 m de profondeur.

Schéma levé le 10/02/00 avec mention des niveaux de découverte

des objets

VUE EN COUPE

Ech: 1/20 ème

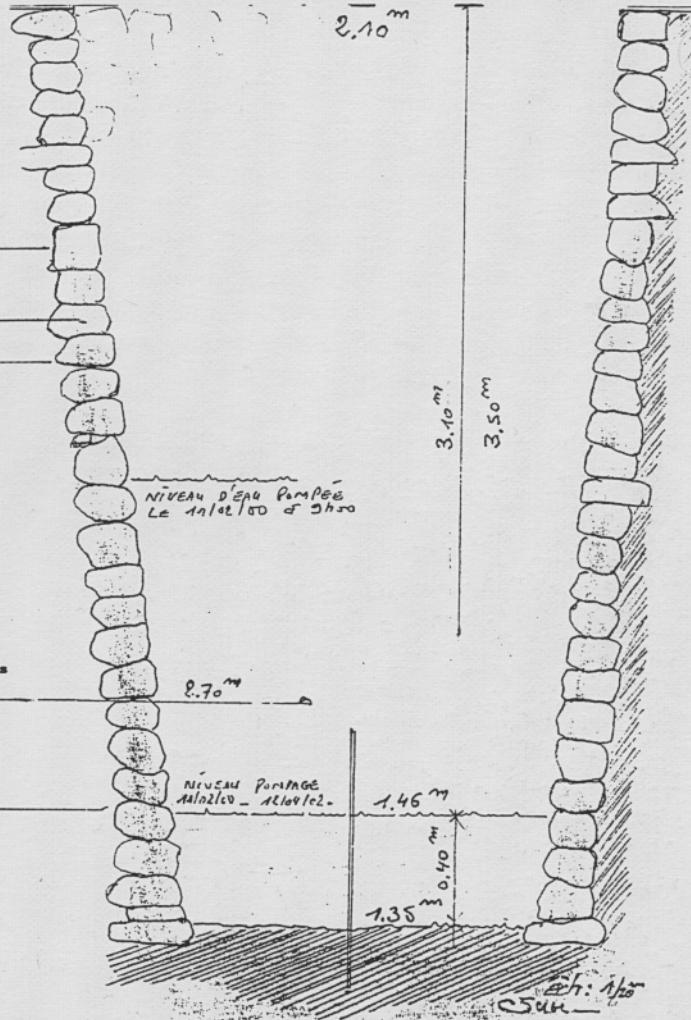
Déchets végétaux,
bois, cailloux,
bouteilles intactes,
et bris de verres

Pièce de monnaie
datant de 1943

zone de brûlage

-2.70 m restant de
baril éclaté dans
lequel seront retrouvées
éparpillées, faïences,
ampoule de morphine,
seringue, etc.

-3.10 m fragment
de peigne datant
de 1851.



Rapport de découverte du Puits de PAUL GAUGUIN Atuona, HIVA-OA. 1^{er} Mai 2002 16

4. Sectional drawing of Gauguin's well, from 'Rapport de la découverte du puits de la Maison du Jouir de Paul Gauguin', Hiva Oa 2002, p. 16

wide at the top (ground level), 1.35 m wide at the bottom, and 3.5 m deep. The objects that presumably came from Gauguin's house were found at around 2.7 m, the 1943 coin around 1.2 m, and the comb dated 1851 at 3.1 m (see sketch of the excavation, ill. 4). Since the well was cut fresh into the ground in 1901, the 1851 comb could not have been thrown into it earlier than that date. It must have been part of Gauguin's household effects or belonged to one of his visitors. The coin from 1943, found closer to the top of the well shaft, was underneath a layer of more recent bottles, stones, wood and broken glass (this layer began 90 cm below the top of the well). This suggests that the well shaft was open until at least the mid-twentieth century, when it was filled in and lost to sight. This layer was separated from the earlier contents by a layer of dirt and water 90 cm thick.

One must, of course, consider the possibility that all the contents of the well date from a somewhat later period, and there are indeed a few later items among those that we believe came from Gauguin's house. However, archaeologist Robert Suggs has reported that it is a common occurrence in well excavation for heavy objects to sink to lower levels,¹⁰ and the evidence from the remaining objects of a connection with the artist is very strong.

The objects found in the well range from the mundane (broken crockery) to the tragic (empty vials of morphine). I have grouped them into the following categories:

Items relating to Gauguin's health

It is well known that Gauguin suffered terribly during his last few years, as the local Protestant pastor, Paul Vernier, noted: 'He went out rarely; one saw him dragging himself along with difficulty, [with] his ulcerated legs, barefoot.'¹¹ He also suffered from the effects of a badly healed broken ankle incurred nine years earlier in a fight in Concarneau (Brittany). While some doubt the diagnosis of syphilis,¹² others maintain that Gauguin picked up this disease in Paris during his return to France in 1894-95.¹³ Syphilis, furthermore, could have exacerbated the problems with eczema on his legs. Late self-portraits suggest that he was suffering from the 'tertiary' phase of syphilis, which can result in a softening of the cartilage in the nose. His famous beaked nose became more exaggerated as the disease ate away the cartilage around the bone (ill. 5). In April 1903, just before his death, Gauguin invited Pastor Vernier to his home, stating that he was 'very sick'.¹⁴ After the visit, Vernier wrote: 'I went to see him. He was suffering horribly in the legs, which were all red, covered with eczema.'¹⁵ The pain from all of these ailments must have been tremendous, which explains the presence of a *syringe* and two light-green coloured glass *ampoules*, which had contained morphine (each 46 mm in length, 13 mm and 11 mm wide at the bottom, 16 mm and 13 mm at the top).

One *clear glass bottle* (11.5 cm tall, 2.5 cm wide) embossed: 'Baxter's Lung Preserver Christchurch' [New Zealand] on the front, and on the bottom: 'A 458 c UGB 2'. This was a cough mixture.

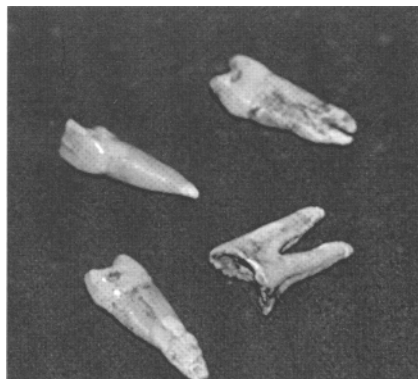
One *clear glass bottle* (12.5 cm tall, 3 cm wide) embossed: 'Sloans Liniment'. This was an unguent rubbed onto the skin to soothe aches and pains by warming the affected area.¹⁶

One broken *brown glass bottle* embossed in glass: 'This bottle always remains the property of Dalgety and Co Ltd.' This contained a kauri-based medicine from New Zealand. Kauri is a tree that grows there and not in the Marquesas. Medicines made from its resin were touted to cure stress, abdominal pains and intestinal problems.



5. Paul Gauguin,
Self-portrait, undated,
pencil and charcoal,
Private collection

6. Four teeth (Gauguin's ?): Collection
Centre Paul Gauguin, Atuona, Hiva Oa,
The Marquesas



Four *teeth*: Each of these teeth shows advanced decay. Perhaps they were extracted and thrown into the well? Only detailed chemical analysis could ascertain whether or not these were Gauguin's teeth, but the severe decay suggests that they belonged to a European and not to a Marquesan. In 1903 the Marquesan diet was rich in fruits and seafood; sugar was generally absent from their diet, resulting in white, healthy teeth.¹⁷ The state of advanced decay in these teeth suggests that their owner must have suffered a great deal of pain until their extraction. Although, in his text *Avant et après*, Gauguin claimed 'I had very good teeth', his use of the past tense may be indicative of later problems (ill. 6).¹⁸

Without analyses of Gauguin's remains, it is impossible to make any definitive diagnoses of his state of health. However, he gives us many hints from his correspondence of the extent of his suffering, if not the details of each illness. Syphilis could have been one problem, as was eczema, which led to open sores on his legs. Ulcerated sores can also be a symptom of secondary syphilis. Heart problems, however, were another problem that Gauguin battled: his father had died of a heart attack at the age of thirty-five, and Gauguin himself had a series of heart attacks in late 1897, when he was forty-nine. Inflammation of the aorta can cause heart problems as early as two to three years after infection by syphilis. Thus a heart attack caused by nine years of syphilis could have caused Gauguin's death on 8 May 1903.¹⁹

Household effects

5 pieces of a broken *plate*, faience. This hand-painted plate was made by the Faïencerie Henriot of Quimper (Brittany). Gauguin might have brought it with him from Brittany.

Four broken white *bowls* with geometric border designs, French, 13.2 cm wide at top, 8 cm tall. Bowls of this size were common in France, used, among other things, for drinking coffee with milk in the morning.

Various broken pieces of *plates*, one stamped '*France nord St Amand*' with a windmill mark on the bottom.

One white porcelain *door pull*, 6 cm wide.

One lock plate and various nails and pieces of *rusted metal* from a carriage.

Metal pieces from a *gas stove*.

Rusty metal pieces from a *well pump*, 79 cm long.

Rubber sealing rings from jars of preserved food.

One broken *brown bottle* embossed 'John Rap...on S.F. Cal' on front. 17 cm tall, 8 cm wide.

Broken *beer bottle*: embossed in a circle on the front of the bottle: 'The Kauri Brewery Ltd Woodville [New Zealand], Kauri Brand', 27.8 cm tall, 8.3 cm wide at base.

One broken *oil lamp*. Since there was no electricity, and too much offshore wind for candles, oil lamps were the main source of light after dark.

One two-ounce *glass vial of Bovril*, embossed two sides: '2 oz Bovril limited' and on the bottom, 'bottle made in England by FGC'. Bovril is a salty beef extract used as a nutritional supplement.

Many large greenish-coloured broken pieces of *glass jars* (called '*dames-jeannes*') which had contained 32 litres of wine, purchased from Ben Varney's store right across the street. Three empty but intact *Dames-jeannes* are noted in the official inventory of objects found inside the house after Gauguin's death, as well as five that were full.²⁰

Various *liquor bottles*. Rum and absinthe were common commodities in the islands.

Four pieces of broken glass *perfume bottles*, all embossed 'France' on the bottom: 14 cm tall, c. 7 cm wide. A classic way to please local women in Polynesia was to offer them perfume. Gauguin noted: 'There is, however, one thing about the Marquesans that bothers me, and that is their excessive liking for perfume; the storekeeper sells them a horrible mixture of musk and patchouli. When there are many of them in a church, all these perfumes become unbearable. But, here again, the fault lies with the Europeans. You won't smell any lavender water, for the natives, to whom it is forbidden to sell a drop of alcohol, drink it as soon as they can get their hands on it.'²¹

Gauguin developed quite a reputation on Hiva Oa for parties in the evening, and for attracting women to his house for sex (although Pastor Vernier noted that he was almost impotent²²) or for modelling, or just for company. While Gauguin did write, 'My life in the Marquesas is that of a recluse living far from the road, disabled and working away at my art, speaking not one word of the Marquesas

language, and only very rarely seeing a few Europeans who come by to say hello,' he also added: 'Often, it's true, the women come to see me for a minute, but because they're curious about the photographs and drawings hung on the walls and especially because they want to try to play my harmonium.'²³ We may doubt his modest disclaimer to an active social life, however, by the fact that he had prominently labelled his house with the words 'Maison du Jouir' (House of Pleasure), a title associated with French houses of prostitution. Wine, perfume, and rum were all part of the attraction.

Various *bones*: rat, bird and chicken.

Artistic materials

Three chunks each of orange and ochre coloured *minerals*. Each of these pieces appears to have been once contained in a metal can, since lines of the ribs of the can can be seen imbedded in the material. The orange colour may have been made from ground seeds. The ochre is similar in colour to that used as body paint by many Marquesans. Each piece smells strongly of linseed oil, suggesting that Gauguin had used these mineral elements to make his own paint.

One broken coconut shell with small pieces of *pigments* inside, the same colours as the above.

One *paint or toothbrush* made from the fibrous end of the pandanus fruit, called *faa*, cut and bound. This may have been either a rough, but soft, paintbrush, or a toothbrush. In the Marquesas these brushes are still used by craftsmen to apply black paint to bowls.²⁴

There is no historical explanation as to how all of these objects got into the well behind Gauguin's *fare*, but there seem to be only two possibilities: that Gauguin used the well as a garbage pit for empty or broken objects; or that after his death, whoever cleaned out the house threw empty, broken or useless (that is unsaleable) objects into the well. Since Gauguin was incapacitated at the end of the life, polluting his own well seems dubious, as he needed the source of clean water. The second scenario seems more likely: useless items were thrown into the well either as his house was emptied of its contents for the auction or by the new owner, Ben Varney. For the moment, some of the objects are on display in the new Centre Paul Gauguin, while the rest are wrapped in newspaper and stored in cardboard boxes in Atuona.

NOTES

This report could not have been written without the help and encouragement of the staff of the MS Paul Gauguin (Regent Seven Seas Cruises), and the mayor of Atuona, Guy Rauzy. This article is dedicated to their determination to preserve and responsibly promote Gauguin's legacy in The Marquesas.

1. Paul Gauguin, May 1901, in *The writings of a savage*, ed. Daniel Guérin, trans. Eleanor Leveux, New York 1996, p. 210.
2. There is a small, but excellent body of research on Gauguin's time in the Marquesas. See George T.M. Shackelford and Claire Frèches-Thory (eds.), exhib. cat. *Gauguin, Tahiti; l'atelier des tropiques*, Paris (Grand Palais) & Boston (Museum of Fine Arts) 2003-4, for a detailed history of this period in the artist's life, as well as an extensive bibliography. I would also like to thank art historians Belinda Thomson and Elizabeth Childs and archaeologist Heidy Baumgarten for their comments and corrections to early drafts of this article, and archaeologist Robert Suggs for his insights into Polynesian culture.
3. In August 1896 Gauguin visited the newly opened Maori collection of the Auckland Institute and Museum in Auckland, New Zealand, where he was stranded for almost three weeks awaiting transport to Tahiti. See George T.M. Shackelford, 'The Return to Paradise', in exhib. cat. *Gauguin, Tahiti*, pp. 199 ff. and notes, for more on the Auckland visit and photos of Maori houses and other objects.
4. Paul Gauguin, *Avant et après*; cited in *The writings of a savage*, p. 278.
5. Only two other wells were known to be on the island: one at the Catholic Mission, and another at the far end of the valley of Atuona. Unpublished report (only available at the Town Hall in Atuona): Jean Saucourt, Serge Lecordier, Christian Gaubil, Jo Reus, Richard Saucourt, Tematai Lecordier, Jean-Mark Tiitai, 'Rapport de la découverte du puits de la Maison du Jouis de Paul Gauguin', Hiva Oa 2002, p. 20. Most residents of Atuona got their water from springs

scattered around the village and its outskirts.

6. Note that the French rank of *brigadier* is equivalent to the English rank of sergeant, rather than the higher-ranking English brigadier.
7. 'l'atelier de Gauguin, long fare quelconque maintenant tout nu, tout depouillé' ... 'un Buddha qui serait né au pays maori.' Victor Segalen, *Gauguin dans son dernier décor, et autres textes de Tahiti*, ed. Annie Joly Segalen and Dominique Lelong, Fontfroide 1986, pp. 15-16.
8. Ibid., p. 11.
9. See *Dossier de la succession Paul Gauguin*, Papeete (Société des études océaniques) 1957.
10. Email exchange, February 2007.
11. 'Il sortait rarement; on le voyait alors se trainer péniblement, avec ses jambes ulcérées, pieds nus...' Quoted in Segalen, *Gauguin dans son dernier décor*, p. 117.
12. Archaeologist Robert Suggs, for example, disagrees with the diagnosis of syphilis, pointing to the many healthy offspring of Gauguin.
13. Belinda Thomson, *Gauguin*, London 1987, p. 18. The information originally came from Bengt Danielsson, according to Thomson, in conversation, June 2004.
14. Gauguin, cited in Segalen, *Gauguin dans son dernier décor*, p. 117.
15. Paul Vernier, cited in Segalen, *Gauguin dans son dernier décor*, p. 117. 'J'allai chez lui. Il souffrait horriblement des jambes qui étaient rouges, couvertes d'eczéma.'
16. Sloans Liniment was not marketed until 1903. It could, therefore, have arrived in Atuona to provide Gauguin some relief only during the last few months or weeks of his life. Or, like the two jars of 'Tiger Balm' and the bottle with the embossed label of 'Warner's Safe Kidney and Liver Remedy, Rochester, New York', found at the same level, it may be a later addition to the well's contents. The Warner's product, a soporific whose main ingredients included horehound, was sold from 1880 to 1906 as 'Warner's Safe Kidney and Liver Cure', but in 1906 a legal decision forced the manufacturer to change 'Cure' to 'Remedy' (information from Michael Raeburn).
17. Information from archaeologist Mark Eddowes, interview 2002.
18. Gauguin, *Avant et après*; cited in *The writings of a savage*, p. 268.
19. Segalen, *Gauguin dans son dernier décor*, p. 118. Segalen quotes Paul Vernier, the Protestant pastor who found Gauguin dead

in his house and who tried, unsuccessfully, to revive him with artificial respiration. Vernier attributed Gauguin's death to a heart attack.

20. *Dossier de la succession Paul Gauguin*, p. 29.

21. Gauguin, *Avant et après*; cited in *The writings of a savage*, pp. 281-82.

22. Vernier, cited in Segalen, *Gauguin dans son dernier décor*, p. 117.

23. Gauguin, *The writings of a savage*, p. 293, from a letter written to the Lieutenant of the Gendarmerie in Papeete. Actually, Gauguin's house was quite close to the road and only a short walk from Ben Varney's store. The English translation of 'far from the road' is a misrepresentation of Gauguin's French phrase and might be better expressed as 'off the beaten track', referring to the island as a whole and not to his specific property.

24. Elizabeth Childs noticed these brushes on the Marquesan island of Ua Huka, In conversation, June 2004.

About the authors

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ELISE ECKERMANN is a specialist in the work of Paul Gauguin. She graduated from the University of Bonn with her Ph.D. thesis „*En lutte contre une puissance formidable*“ Paul Gauguin im Spannungsfeld von Kunstkritik und Kunstmarkt, Weimar 2003. She contributed to the conferences *Gauguin entre deux cultures* at the Musée d'Orsay, Paris (2003); and to *Gauguin's 'Vision of the Sermon': Interpretation, reception, conservation* at the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh (2005). In 2003 she co-published *Dans le sillage de Gauguin: Un voyage de Pont-Aven à Tahiti* (Papeete / Brest). She works as an independent research scholar in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

DAVID W. GALENSON is Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago and a Research Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research. Galenson's early work concerned indentured servitude in Colonial America, but in recent years he has been exploring through artists' behaviour the nature of human creativity, publishing three recent books on the subject, *Painting Outside the Lines: Patterns of Creativity in Modern Art* (2001); *Artistic Capital* (2006); and *Old Masters and Young Genius: The Two Life Cycles of Artistic Creativity* (2006). He is currently writing a book on conceptual art practices in the twentieth century.

JOAN E. GREER (Ph.D. Free University, Amsterdam; Associate Professor, University of Alberta) specializes in nineteenth-century art and design with a focus on artistic identity and representations of self, art and religion, art periodicals, and sustainable design. Publications include 'Representing "Dutch Woman" at the 1898 National Exhibition for Women's Labour', in *Designing Effective Communications* (2006);

“Christ, this great artist” – Van Gogh’s socio-religious canon of art’ in *Vincent’s choice: The musée imaginaire of Van Gogh* (2003); and ‘Three Christ Paintings ... by Thorn Prikker’ in *Jong Holland* (2003).

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Van Gogh Studies provides a forum for international studies in aspects of late nineteenth-century western art. This first volume, which focuses on some current issues of the period, offers a rich assortment of ideas and insights.

Robert L. Herbert presents a study of the investigation by Toulouse-Lautrec's friend Henry Nocq into the relationship between the fine and the decorative arts in the 1890s. Joan E. Greer illustrates in detail the publication of Van Gogh's letters in the Belgian modernist periodical *Van Nu & Straks* in 1893, while Louis van Tilborgh establishes a precise date for the months when Van Gogh attended art classes at Fernand Cormon's Paris studio. David W. Galenson and Robert Jensen thoroughly discuss the White's ground-breaking *Canvases and careers* (1965) on the nineteenth-century French art market. Elise Eckermann, June Hargrove and Caroline Boyle-Turner each provide thought-provoking essays on Gauguin's work, Eckermann on its critical reception after the artist's departure to the South Seas in 1895, Hargrove on Gauguin as a sculptor among his contemporaries, and Boyle-Turner on the findings in his Tahitian well.

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